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*THE CIVIL SERVICE:  
ITS PROBLEMS AND FUTURE*

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CIVIL SERVICE STAFF RELATIONSHIPS (1943)

AN INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION  
(in the press)

# *THE CIVIL SERVICE: ITS PROBLEMS AND FUTURE*

*BY E. N. GLADDEN*

*M.Sc.(Econ.), Ph.D.(Public Admin.)*



S T A P L E S P R E S S

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'NOW IT is the beginning of wisdom to understand that social life is founded upon routine. Unless society is permeated, through and through, with routine, civilisation vanishes. So many sociological doctrines, the products of acute intellects, are wrecked by obliviousness to this fundamental sociological truth. Society presupposes stability, foresight itself presupposes stability, and stability is the product of routine.'

*Adventures of Ideas*, A. N. Whitehead.



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## *PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION*

THE BRITISH CIVIL SERVICE is one of the institutions for which we are envied abroad: it has justly gained a high reputation both for its integrity and its efficiency. The result is that in normal times the service is taken for granted and, while this constitutes a sign that it is functioning as it should, it is not necessarily a good thing, since it is one of the essentials of democracy that the people should maintain an active interest in their political institutions.

To-day, in wartime, the situation is rather different. The Civil Service is very much in the news: it interferes too much in our daily lives for us to remain neutral. Many criticisms are heard and, since some of them come from weighty authorities, it would be futile to deny that they have some basis in truth.

There are, however, a number of points to be borne in mind in this connexion. We should be suspicious of individual instances of breakdown or foolishness purporting to give a representative impression of the general functioning of the administrative machine. When literally millions of individuals are being dealt with it would be strange if no awkward cases arose, and such cases naturally afford a suitable occasion for dramatic publicity. When it comes to the more general criticisms it should not be forgotten that the Civil Service does not defend itself and that (except when a Royal Commission or Select Committee, with full access to the men and the records, is officially entrusted with the task of investigation), proposals from outside sources are more often than not directed from a somewhat academic angle. The Civil Service has certainly not been well served by the independent investigator. Lastly, we should not forget that the wartime Civil Service—it had grown from 371,050 on 1st April, 1939, to 678,470 on 1st April, 1943—is a very different service from the peacetime service, a Civil Service whose task is in the nature of an emergency and of a type for which the peacetime service was not intended, nor was it the desire of anyone in Britain that it should have to confront such a task. It has been largely recruited on a short-term basis from persons with very different traditions from the permanent Civil Service. This is, of course, a necessity of the war situation, but we should be careful in directing our

criticisms against the present machinery to bear the distinction in mind. The faults we discover to-day may be in the situation rather than the human elements; they may have no validity in relation to the traditional practices of the Civil Service.

The real uneasiness in people's minds, however, does not rest, it is suggested, on a criticism of the Civil Service either of yesterday or of to-day, but in a recognition that the war inevitably marks a great change in the social structure of our world and that to-morrow's needs will require a new Civil Service for their fulfilment. Is our present administrative machine flexible enough to meet these new needs? This is a wise and necessary question and it is indeed a good omen that it is being asked so insistently.

Too little is known about the Civil Service. It is indeed not an easy subject or one susceptible to popularisation. Problems connected with administration are always heavy going, yet that is no excuse for the present almost complete lack of detailed information. From the many admirable studies of the English Constitution we may discover quite a lot about the legal and constitutional position of the administration, but to consider the question of efficiency it is essential that we should know something of the administrative problems affecting the actual personnel of the Civil Service, and it is the aim of this book to offer a brief but reasonably comprehensive survey of the Civil Service from this particular angle.

The greater part of the book was written before the war and except where it is clearly stated, the picture given relates to the Civil Service as it was on the eve of the present war. This is, undoubtedly, a proper starting point for a consideration of the changes required to meet our post-war needs. Without such a basis of information we are arguing in a vacuum and that, although an exciting enough pastime for those who are fond of dialectics, is a luxury we can hardly afford in these days of stress.

One other point: the problem of administration is one of the key problems of our advancing civilisation. It is a problem with its roots deep in recorded history, a problem that is not bounded by the sphere of the State service. For this reason, although personnel problems of the British Civil Service in this present decade are under review, the discussion is always held to be proceeding in a much wider context. Only thus can we hope to obtain the viewpoint we require.

The writer should perhaps make it clear that this essay is

based upon a practical experience of nearly thirty years in the Civil Service, reinforced by a period of intensive study of civil services in general to support a thesis on *The Attainment of Efficiency in the State Service*, for which he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by the University of London in 1936. But while, in accordance with the normal procedure, official permission has been obtained for the printing of the book, it must be clearly understood that none of the opinions expressed therein has any official endorsement or support whatever. The author is entirely responsible for the work and, of course, for its defects, but his thanks are due to all who so generously furnished him with information during his original researches and to Mr. E. V. Eves, D.P.A., who so kindly undertook the tiresome task of reading the proofs.

E. N. GLADDEN.

*High Wycombe,  
September, 1944.*

## PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

IT IS GRATIFYING to be called upon so soon for a new edition of this book, clear evidence that the subject is coming much under serious discussion. The time is not yet ripe for a complete revision, for the organisation of the post-war Civil Service is only very gradually taking shape and it is much too early yet to undertake the task of providing a definitive picture.

The changes so far made are, in fact, not very radical and the text of the first edition, although it sets out the position as it was upon the eve of the war, substantially reflects the picture as it is to-day. To bridge the gap which does exist and bring the reader up to date, a new introduction has been added. The most extensive changes have occurred in staff training—a very welcome sign of the times—and to obtain a helpful picture of the developing situation in this particular field the reader is advised first to read Chapter Four, which deals briefly with the pre-war position, then to go on to Appendix 4, which summarises the Assheton Report of 1944, and finally to read pages 18-22 of the new introduction.

The only significant amendment to the main text is the substitution on page 108 of the Select Committee of Public Accounts for the Select Committee on National Expenditure, to which reference was previously made as part of the machinery of Civil Service control. The National Expenditure Committee was appointed by Parliament during the war and it made a very helpful contribution to the supervision of the administrative side of the Government during that period, but it did not replace the Select Committee of Public Accounts, which has been acting as an effective critic of the departments' financial transactions since its first establishment in 1861. The statistics and other particulars in Appendices 1 and 2 have been brought up to date.

In conclusion, may I thank reviewers for their consideration and constructive criticisms, and also those correspondents who have taken the trouble in very busy times to write to me about the book. It is only through such kindly interest that an author can hope to remove blemishes, of the existence of which he must always be conscious.

E. N. GLADDEN.

*London, N.22,  
April, 1947.*

## INTRODUCTION

### THE EMERGING SERVICE, 1947

IT WAS INEVITABLE that during the war the Civil Service should take on a new appearance, should cease, as it were, to look like its old self. Not only had it new and strange tasks to perform, so that it needed to suspend or even to abandon many of its peacetime rules and practices, but it also had many temporary administrators from outside professions and occupations, including both the eminent and the ordinary, to acclimatise to its ways of dealing with affairs. Certainly these newcomers did not always find it easy to divest themselves of the attitudes they had acquired in the hurly-burly of the open market where they had become accustomed to place a definite price upon their invaluable services, but they did bring in new ideas and such were needed in the new wartime Service.

Many of these newcomers grafted their ideas on to the old official stock, creating a blend of the public and competitive worlds which very effectively served its wartime purposes. Others, rather strangely, acquired the manners of the more staid civil servant with such rapidity that they must have surprised themselves, as they certainly very often surprised their new colleagues. They tended to become more Roman than the permanent citizens of old Rome and, lacking the traditions of a strange race, the results were not always perhaps as happy as they might have been. But taking all in all the wartime Service did a good job of work and no permanent official would begrudge his erstwhile colleague a fair share in that achievement.

However, many of the wartime changes were little more than a veneer upon the old Service organisation, the shape of which began to re-emerge as soon as hostilities ceased. On the other hand, as had happened after the previous war, many developments that had been making their leisured progress in the 'thirties were destined to be speeded up both as a result of wartime relaxations from the iron hand of tradition and, more importantly, in active anticipation of the impressive new tasks that lay ahead.

An early step in reorganisation was taken in relation to the Administrative Class, whose responsibilities, it was recognised, were to be greatly increased in the future. It was decided to abolish the Principal Assistant Secretary grade and to increase the pay and responsibilities of the Assistant Secretary grade, the object being, as the official pronouncement<sup>1</sup> states 'to facilitate speedy and efficient transaction of public business by the maximum devolution of responsibility and by the reduction of steps in the administrative structure to the minimum consistent with the needs of sound organisation'. At the same time the salaries of the senior posts were increased, the head of a major department now receiving a salary of £3,500, instead of £3,000, with a special rate of £3,750 a year for the Permanent Secretary to the Treasury. Considering the great responsibilities of these posts it could hardly be said that there was any excess of generosity here!

In the main Clerical-Executive field a notable step in the direction of amalgamation is proposed. The majority of Higher Clerical posts are to be regarded as Junior Executive, the former grading being retained only where the work involved is purely or mainly of a supervisory character. The posts above Higher Clerical, known as Staff Clerk gradings, are to be replaced by equivalent gradings on the Executive side, which means that the Clerical and Executive classes will no longer constitute parallel hierarchies as was originally intended. A further proposal is designed to bring the top reaches of the Executive hierarchy closer to the Administrative side. In future the Senior Executive Officer is to be available for what is termed 'near Principal' work and he 'may report either to a Chief Executive Officer, to an Assistant Secretary, or more exceptionally to a Principal, according to the nature of the organisation and the needs of the work'. An innovation, which will be watched with interest, is the proposal to introduce limited competitive examinations in place of promotion by selection for Clerical Officers up to the age of 27 who aspire to a Junior Executive post.

At an early stage agreement was reached on the National Whitley Council on the consolidation of salaries by the addition of a revised war bonus to the existing scales, an arrangement that has not, however, given civil servants salary advances commensurate with the increase in the cost of living.

The increasing importance of typing and the need for a higher

(<sup>1</sup>) Cmd. 6680 (Sept., 1945).

educational standard among typists, if they are to carry out their duties efficiently, has been recognised by assimilating their recruitment to that of the Clerical Assistants, with improved salaries and opportunities of direct promotion to the Clerical class. At the same time employment of Grade II Clerical Assistants, hitherto employed in a few departments as machine operators, has been discontinued.

Our original study does not include within its scope the problems of the many scientific and professional grades whose specialist duties place them rather outside the range of the Administrative-Clerical field, but this omission was not due to any lack of appreciation of their great importance in the official scheme. Indeed, the war has greatly increased the need for their services and already steps have been taken to meet the long-standing claim that the numerous separate departmental groups should be reorganised into Service classes<sup>1</sup>. Such gradings have already been constituted, in accordance with Treasury rules, for the following specialist officers in the Civil Service: Scientists<sup>2</sup>, Legal Officers, Statisticians, Actuaries, Medical Staff, Professional Accountants and the Works Group of professions (i.e. Architects, Surveyors, Quantity Surveyors, Civil and Structural Engineers, Lands Officers).

During the war many married women were employed as civil servants in a temporary capacity. Some had previously held permanent posts and had been re-engaged after formal resignation under the marriage bar regulations. With the end of the war the question of the employment of married women on a permanent basis was bound to arise and, in view of the Government's full employment policy, it was apparent that the case for the retention of the marriage bar had been greatly weakened. A committee of the National Whitley Council was set up thoroughly to resurvey the problem but, as the staffs were still divided on the subject, their report<sup>3</sup>, issued in August, 1946, set out judicially the arguments for and against abolition of the bar without making a definite recommendation. The Government decided within a few weeks of the publication of the report that the marriage bar should be abolished on the understanding that

(<sup>1</sup>) *The Professional Civil Servant's Handbook* (L. A. C. Herbert) published by the Institution of Professional Civil Servants in 1944, provides a useful survey of the whole field.

(<sup>2</sup>) See White Paper on *The Scientific Civil Service* (Cmd. 6679).

(<sup>3</sup>) *The Marriage Bar in the Civil Service* (Cmd. 6886).

married women in the Civil Service should be subject to the same conditions of service (e.g. with regard to transfers, &c.) as their male and single women colleagues.

### RECRUITMENT

During the war the ordinary open competitions were suspended and recruitment was carried out mainly by the several Ministries, all wartime appointments being on a temporary basis. It was clear therefore that upon the cessation of hostilities there would be an abnormal number of permanent posts to be filled. With this prospect in view the whole problem of post-war recruitment was examined in 1944 by the National Whitley Council, whose recommendations were embodied in a White Paper which was published on 17th November of that year.<sup>(1)</sup> These were subsequently adopted by the Government and approved by the House of Commons. It was decided that open competitive examinations should be resumed as soon as possible after the end of the war in Europe but that there should be special reconstruction competitions, primarily for those who had lost opportunities of competing for the Civil Service owing to the suspension of the ordinary examinations.

The majority of posts under these reconstruction competitions were allocated to ex-Service men and women and many thousands have now entered the Civil Service under the regulations covering the different classes which were published by the Civil Service Commissioners in June, 1945. These candidates, all of whom were above the normal age limits for entry, were required to pass a written test of modest standards, supplemented by personal interview in the case of the senior grades. Since the examinations could not be of a fully competitive standard it was necessary to insist upon minimum educational qualifications and these were set at the levels appropriate to the basic grades of the three classes, viz. Clerical, Executive and Administrative. This deviation from strict open competition was to be only a temporary expedient. There were some objections from ex-Service people who were unable to qualify for one grade or another, but it was the only fair way of avoiding the mistake made after the First World War of recruiting ex-Service men of standards lower than the normal competitions would have permitted to enter, and there is little

<sup>(1)</sup> Cmd. 6567.



reason to believe that the ineligible in the present case would have stood much real chance of passing the normal competitions. Furthermore, the educational requirements have been liberally interpreted by the Civil Service Commissioners.

A feature of the personal interview in the case of candidates for the Administrative and other senior grades has been the adoption of the so-called 'house party' selection procedure successfully used in the Services in the selection of officers. The candidates are brought together in small groups in a country house where they are kept under observation and subjected to various tests by expert selectors. This new method of discovering potential leaders is greatly esteemed in certain quarters and there can be little doubt that it was wise to impose some additional check upon the personality of entrants to the directing classes outside normal competitive channels, but whether this is the right sort of test for normal times remains to be proved. For the selection of officers in wartime, when speed is essential, a test calculated to bring out the qualities which a good officer obviously needs is bound to be a great improvement upon the older method of assessing the capacity for leadership in the field largely on the basis of the candidate's social origins. The wartime success of the new psychological procedures is not, therefore, to be wondered at, but whether, for example, we yet know enough about the essential qualities of the successful administrator to render such a method reasonably accurate even if the basic idea is sound, is open to grave doubt.

The special reconstruction examinations are already giving way to normal open competitions, which were resumed during 1946. In some of these new competitions, however, the number of competitors has been disappointing and it seems that, for the time being at any rate, the Civil Service has lost some of its one-time popularity as a career. How much this is due to the special circumstances of the hour only time will show. To-day there is a wide field of choice for the junior who would normally enter the Civil Service, and that the policy of full employment will have an influence of its own can hardly be doubted. Then there is the constant campaign of criticism of the Civil Service by a certain section of the press which is bound to have an adverse effect upon the Service's prestige, especially upon those of impressionable age. Certainly the Civil Service Commissioners are regarding the matter seriously and steps have been taken to discover just what

are the causes of the change.<sup>(1)</sup> Other factors to be considered are surely the influence of the new social security schemes upon those who regard security as an important advantage of a particular employment, and also the general sense of insecurity produced by recent scientific advances which must tend to place long-term employment and pension rights very much in the realm of the hypothetical.

In the meantime improved publicity is being adopted in advertising the examinations and conditions of service, while among other improvements the scale of fees for sitting these examinations has been drastically reduced and excessive expenses incurred in attending an examination are being refunded.

The case of the temporary civil servants who are not eligible to sit the examinations has been considered and arrangements made for a small number of posts to be allocated to them. A selected group of these officers have been granted permanent status with special superannuation concessions, but the rest are gradually being replaced by the successful examination candidates. At the end of the war it was necessary in order to avoid serious shortages of staff in the central departments to issue the Control of Employment (Civil Servants) Order, 1945, which prevented a civil servant terminating his employment without first obtaining the written permission of his department, but this Order, which led to a good deal of heart-burning, particularly on the part of temporary employees who wished to take a chance in the open labour market while the going was good, was lifted on 1st February, 1947. The stage is therefore set for a complete change over to normal methods of recruitment.

### TRAINING

It is in the field of staff training that the greatest advances have been made during the last three years. Bearing in mind the pre-war position briefly sketched in Chapter Four, it is hardly an exaggeration to state that the changes which are at present in full flood are nothing less than revolutionary. This is all to the good, since as a result of activities in no other direction is a greater return in increased efficiency likely to accrue. Moreover, changes in administrative techniques, speeded up by the war,

<sup>(1)</sup> A special inquiry was undertaken at the request of H.M. Treasury by the Social Survey. See *Hansard*, 3rd December, 1946, Vol. 431, No. 16, Written Answers 62.

must inevitably render post-entry training more essential than ever before.

Early action was taken upon the recommendations of the Committee on the Training of Civil Servants, now generally referred to, after the name of its chairman, as the Assheton Committee.<sup>(1)</sup> A special central staff training organisation was set up at H.M. Treasury in the form of a separate Training and Education Division under a Director of Training and during 1945 a centre was acquired in Richmond Terrace on the other side of Whitehall<sup>(2)</sup>. The new division lays down the general lines on which training is to be carried out throughout the Service and at the training centre special classes are conducted on the most up-to-date lines for new entrants to the Administrative Class, training instructors in the ministries and other specialist groups; meetings of staff training officers from the ministries are held for the exchange of ideas, while experiments are carried out and a special library is being rapidly accumulated for the use of students at the courses. The whole outlook is progressive, the aim being to inculcate in the trainee an interest in his work and profession and to encourage him to cultivate that interest in the future.

However, the number of trainees that can be dealt with at the Treasury is unavoidably limited and even were the central training of all civil servants desirable, which, for a number of obvious reasons, is definitely not the case, its fulfilment would be a physical impossibility. The greater part of staff training is therefore undertaken by the ministries, each of which has appointed a training officer who has charge of an expert staff, consisting mainly of experienced officers of the ministry who combine knowledge of the work with aptitude to organise courses and to act as instructors. Wherever specialist knowledge is required these staff training divisions are assisted by lecturers with an intimate knowledge of the particular work, who may be officers from the branch closely concerned or outside lecturers from the universities or other teaching institutions.

Within the ministries a further devolution of training usually takes place, namely to the provinces. There, separate training schools are organised to deal with staffs outside London, where most of the headquarters offices are situated. For example, in the Ministry of Labour and National Service, which has a fully

(1) Summarised in Appendix 4, page 180.

(2) The Division has since transferred to the main Treasury building.

developed regional organisation, there is a central staff training school in London, at which specialised courses are provided for staffs throughout the Ministry as well as more general courses for the London staffs, while each of the eleven regions has a staff training organisation of its own.

It will be seen, therefore, that staff training in the Civil Service is now conducted at three levels—Treasury, Ministry Headquarters and Region—and while there is a constant flow of information and advice between the three levels the policy is to allow in each sphere a good deal of autonomy and plenty of scope for experiment. In the brief sketch of the departmental system which follows, the Ministry of Labour and National Service, which has taken up the task of post-war training with considerable drive, is the model. But most ministries are active in this field and, although they have widely differing needs and each naturally adopts the training methods most suitable to its own purposes, there is a constant exchange of ideas and no doubt the picture sketched here is reasonably representative.

Within the ministries training is provided for new entrants to the Clerical and Executive classes, to the equivalent Departmental classes and to the various technical and specialist classes, where these are employed. Usually training for such new entrants consists of lecture and discussion courses which are partly of a background type, i.e. dealing broadly with general Civil Service principles and conditions and with the ministry's development and main functions, and partly introductory to the actual day-to-day work of the particular grade for which the course is designed. The schemes of training for new entrants are not confined to these comparatively short lecture courses but cover also a period of supervised training on the work, during which the trainee is not counted as a full staff unit. There are also, for officers already experienced in the ministry's work, general courses, usually of a refresher type, which aim at keeping the trainee up to date on his work. Besides these grade courses there are specialist courses for officers who are concerned with particular aspects of the ministry's work. Courses may also be organised to meet special needs, e.g. the 'Returning Warriors' courses provided for members of the permanent staff who had been away on war service, the main objects of which were to assist the officer in settling back on to his civil job and also to provide him with an interesting review of the changes—and these were often con-

siderable—that had taken place in the ministry's work while he was away. For those who had returned from the previous war and had a pen thrust into their hands without the least ceremony what a change this new and more human approach would have seemed!

Staff training is being conducted on modern lines. Methods of training appropriate to the adult are adopted and in particular the normal class-room atmosphere is avoided as much as possible. Discussion methods are favoured and 'quizes' and demonstrations are widely used. Instructional visits to other offices and outside organisations are included in the scheme wherever appropriate. Visual aids, in the shape of charts, epidiascope and cinematograph projection, including film strips, are greatly in favour. Staff training handbooks,<sup>(1)</sup> on such subjects as interviewing, letter writing and statistics, have been prepared and a staff training circular, illustrated by sketches and diagrams is sent out to assist in the exchange of ideas between all staff training officers and other instructors.

An interesting example of the specialised type of training is afforded by the recently introduced course for vacancy officers in the employment exchanges. These officers, members of the Ministry of Labour Departmental class, are concerned with filling the vacancies notified to their exchanges by the employers, and in order to perform this work efficiently they need not only to be fully informed on the internal workings of the Employment Exchange Service and to be thoroughly conversant with up-to-date interviewing methods, but also to have a wide knowledge of the industrial situation in the area that the particular exchange serves. They attend a special introductory course at which the various aspects of their work are carefully explained by experts, among whom are technical officers with industrial experience, and the difficulties are thoroughly discussed. Then they are organised into small discussion groups throughout the country under specially-trained group leaders. The task of the groups is to examine over an extended period the chief industries in the area and to discuss the main problems arising. Co-operation with the industrialists is, of course, essential and this is forthcoming in good measure. The investigation is sandwiched with

<sup>(1)</sup> H.M. Treasury have also issued for the use of all recruits a brightly-written brochure, *A Handbook for the New Civil Servant*, which briefly surveys the Civil Service and the civil servant's rights and duties.

the officers' ordinary duties, the group discussions being based upon instructional visits to industrial establishments. The inauguration of this network of study groups is an important forward step in staff training and it is hoped by the adoption of the latest techniques to overcome many of the limitations of the class-room method for the acquirement of practical knowledge. It is clear that, whatever truth there may have been in the past in allegations by industrialists and others that the civil servant was ignorant of the wider world outside his office—and there can be little doubt that such dicta have been sometimes much exaggerated—there will be little basis for such complaints in the future.

One important outcome of the new approach to staff training in the Civil Service will no doubt be that greater encouragement will be given to civil servants to improve their own education in sociological and scientific subjects. To this end the Civil Service Council for Further Education, which in the past did good work in arranging spare-time study facilities for civil servants, has been reconstituted as a tripartite body representing respectively official, staff and general educational interests. It is too early yet to forecast the lines on which this development will proceed.

### PROMOTION

The promotion methods described in Chapter Five and Appendix 3 continue unaltered, subject to wartime modification of the form of the periodic report which has been adopted for the time being. During the war and post-war periods there have been so many promotions owing to the increase in the number of higher posts on the new blocks of work taken over by the Civil Service that the main problems of promotion tend at the moment to be obscured. But many of these problems are inherent in the present staff organisation and they are still there ready to create their own difficulties as soon as normal conditions return.

Even during the period of greater flexibility the situation has not been without its complications and individual exasperations. No one with a knowledge of the uneven incidence of promotion between officers in different ministries, between officers who have been transferred or obtained posts elsewhere and those whose services have been deemed indispensable in their old departments, between permanent officers who in the past have had little opportunity of their own volition to change their particular

jobs and others who have come in from outside specifically to occupy posts for which they had special qualifications, could conclude otherwise than that the Goddess Chance had presided at many of the consequent promotional conclaves. While the new situation has afforded opportunities to many, who have grasped them and proved their capacities in the new positions, it has left many of no less merit to hold the fort in positions from which it was ruled that they could not be spared. And it is still impossible in the Civil Service for an officer to prove himself on a different job unless someone else decrees that the opportunity shall be given to him; he sacrificed all his bargaining power when he passed his examination.

While it is generally agreed that there are possibilities of a dearth of ability arising in the Civil Service, as elsewhere, it seems that the standard of entrants through the new competitions is likely to reach a moderately high average. The great promotional problem later on will be to ensure that all these abilities are economically used to the best advantage of the public service and that the sense of frustration which has so often in the past been experienced, particularly by entrants to the basic Clerical and Executive classes who possessed abilities greater than those which their work called into play, is not allowed again to become widespread. But this will need a much more flexible system of staff organisation than exists at present.

### STAFF CO-OPERATION

During the recent period the contribution of the staff organisations to the smooth running of the administrative machine has been invaluable. Civil Service Whitleyism has justified itself again and again. All the recent changes in personnel management to which brief reference has been made, and many others, have been effected by the Administration in co-operation with the staff's representatives. These devoted men and women have continued, merely for the love of serving their fellows and rarely without some personal sacrifice, to make an essential contribution to the Civil Service's efficiency.

There is, of course, another side to the coin. Rank and file members of the associations tend to leave too much to their representatives, who in their turn tend to become a sort of third estate representing ideas which are very much their own. The

official machine is becoming so vast that the staff organisations tend to approximate to a separate tier with a machine mind of its own. The individual may even find that unless he fits into some preconceived pattern he will receive less sympathy from one of his own representatives than he will get from a member of the Administration. The staff organisations usually speak with the voice of progress, even of revolution, but when it comes to putting their own professional house in order they too often act with almost reactionary vigour. They sometimes appear to have little use for new ideas except in relation to their neighbour's allotment!

In the future more than ever before it will be necessary that the individual civil servant should make a contribution to the advancement of knowledge of his profession and it will be a good thing therefore if the staff organisations pay some attention to this aspect of their members' activities. They are actively supporting and contributing to the development of post-entry training and this in itself will create a greater demand for theoretical knowledge of the processes with which the administrator is intimately concerned. There is a vast field here for research and for the formulation of new principles. The Institute of Public Administration, which is now stirring from its wartime hibernation, can, as a voluntary organisation of public administrators to which the Civil Service furnishes its quota of members, make a great contribution here—provided always that it continues to attract to its ranks the majority of those who are capable and willing to make their individual contributions to the sum of administrative knowledge.

One event during 1946 considerably affected the status of the Civil Service staff movement; namely, the repeal of the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act, 1927, with the result that the associations may again co-operate openly with the wider trade union movement, which includes a right to affiliate to the T.U.C. and to pay, if they so decide, a political levy. Already a majority of the staffs represented by the National Whitley Council, but excluding usually the more senior groups, have decided to affiliate to the T.U.C. There is everything to be said for complete freedom for all workers to co-operate on matters affecting their conditions of employment but the civil servant has special duties to the State as his employer and unless the powers conferred by trade union law are used with discretion the staff organisations are bound to find themselves in unwelcome difficulties as soon as a conflict



of loyalties arises. It would appear that the key to the problem is to allow the civil servant, as an individual, to have an increased degree of political freedom on the understanding that, as an organised worker, he continues to give first place to his professional responsibilities.

### CONTROL

H.M. Treasury and the Civil Service Commission are still the paramount agencies for the general management of Civil Service personnel matters. Reference has already been made to the establishment of a progressive Training and Education Division at the Treasury in accordance with the recommendations of the Assheton Report. An earlier change, arising as a result of proposals made by the wartime Parliamentary Committee on National Expenditure,<sup>(1)</sup> involved the strengthening of the Treasury's Organisation and Methods Division and the consequent establishment of similar organisations in each of the major ministries with the object of improving the existing organisation and methods procedure in conformity with up-to-date principles of scientific management. Much good work is being done and a great deal of study is being given to this rewarding subject. There is a free exchange of ideas between the different branches and a special bulletin, to which officers on the work freely contribute, is sent out from the Treasury.<sup>(2)</sup>

### FULL STEAM AHEAD

Since the end of the war in 1945 a great reconstruction programme has been put into operation by the Government. This has given considerable new tasks to the Administration and, consequently, new burdens have fallen upon a Civil Service already overstrained by the war effort, during the course of which staffs were often short and hours invariably too long. As we have already seen, the question of reorganisation of the Service to deal with the post-war situation was quickly taken in hand but the altering and recasting of a vast administrative structure can never be an easy one, since, apart from the various technical and

<sup>(1)</sup> *Sixteenth Report from the Select Committee on National Expenditure*, Session 1941-42 'Organisation and Control of the Civil Service', 120.

<sup>(2)</sup> For an up-to-date survey and critique, see *Fifth Report from the Select Committee on Estimates*, Session 1946-47, 'Organisation and Methods and Its Effect on the Staffing of Government Departments'.

psychological problems arising, the continuing day-to-day tasks of the central administration have to be carried on while 'the changes are being thought out and introduced.' It is not a matter for surprise, therefore, that the process of change should be gradual rather than drastic.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury, speaking in the House of Commons on 21st June, 1946,<sup>(1)</sup> to the second reading of the Superannuation Bill, referred to this measure as forming part of the comprehensive plan for reconstruction of the Civil Service for the post-war period, which the Government believed was now necessary. It would be mere guesswork at the time of writing to suggest just what is meant by a comprehensive plan of reconstruction, for we have already seen that the piecemeal changes which can be discerned as they are taking place, appear to be making no revolutionary change in the old pre-war structure.

One important trend at least can be detected; namely, the aim of the Treasury to weld the various classes in the Clerical-Executive-Departmental field into a more homogeneous service and, for the many reasons set forth in this book, this is an objective which is very much to be desired.

Paradoxically, recent developments in the work of the Civil Service which grows more and more complex with the advance of socialisation, render such service-wide unification much more difficult to achieve. There were originally, in support of retaining separate departmental gradings in the Clerical-Executive field in some ministries, several arguments, all of which were not by any means of equal validity, but to-day the demand for more specialisation tends to reinforce the case in favour of retaining such gradings, and furthermore there is an increasing degree of specialisation of posts within the classes themselves.

In some branches of the work direct contacts with the public tend to convert the office worker into a social worker rather than a clerk in the older sense. Basically, however, so long as the official is concerned with administration rather than with one of the other professional fields, his instinct and capacity for clerkship are of first importance. There are common principles behind all these jobs, which appear so different on the surface, and the danger of multiplying the number of specialised fields must be avoided. If it is agreed that these new techniques should be practised by officers with a sound general knowledge of the

(<sup>1</sup>) *Hansard*, Vol. 424, No. 160, columns 610-617, 21st June, 1946.

department's work, the best way to achieve the required objectives would appear to be to continue recruitment on the general basis and, after a suitable initial period, to select carefully for appropriate training with the aim of combining general skill with the specialised knowledge required. It would be undesirable to allocate any officer indefinitely to specialised work, of which the particular department may have more than one type. Changes at reasonable intervals should help him to acquire a varied experience and at the same time keep him on the right lines for promotion within his general class. This should avoid the production of the official with limited vision and leave a wide field open to the promotee, who will become less and less a specialist as he broadens his grasp of the real activity to which his life is devoted, namely the task of administration.

Partly on account of the development just mentioned, which is usually but vaguely grasped by the outside critic, and partly for other—and perhaps more obvious—reasons, numerous suggestions are being made in the press and from the platform to the effect that a new type of civil servant is required to deal with the new tasks of government. Many of these reformers appear to be working with a basic image in their minds of the typical civil servant, an image built up vicariously of shreds and allusions culled from time to time from the serio-comic press. However, the more serious proposals do receive authoritative support and obviously deserve serious consideration. Here we may summarise the main demand into the introduction into the Civil Service of (1) businessmen or persons with industrial experience <sup>(1)</sup> and (2) trained social workers.<sup>(2)</sup>

In regard to the proposal to recruit the businessman or industrialist to the Civil Service, should we not ponder whether this is not a case of putting the cart before the horse? No doubt an individual entering either the business or the public service world to be a success needs to be of a certain type, but it is surely nearer the mark to say that in either case the environment produces the man rather than vice versa. When they leave school it is not likely that the two types will differ greatly, but later it would be quite another matter. The business man mingling with the other members of his Civil Service grade would soon begin to conform

<sup>(1)</sup> Notably in the *Economist*, 1945-46, several issues.

<sup>(2)</sup> See Elizabeth Macadam's *The Social Servant in the Making* (1945): also 'Social Sciences and the Civil Service' in *Nature*, Vol. 155, page 767, 30th June, 1945.

to pattern or become very unhappy and want to return to his old field. How anyone else than the second-rater would 'be attracted by Civil Service scales of pay is never made very clear by advocates of the change. No, to alter the civil servant one must first change the structure of the Civil Service and introduce new incentives, and so far as this may be necessary to grapple with the new problems there would appear to be no real mystery to be solved here.

The argument in favour of the employment of the social worker is in rather a different category and there would be no difficulty in recruiting social workers as specialists if that were required. The Civil Service Commissioners already hold appropriate competitions where professional workers are needed. The claim for the social worker, however, is generally put forward as a case for his entry on the Clerical-Administrative side. A doubt arises here whether the general term 'social worker' has any more precise significance than, say, the term 'production worker', but the suggestion is that the civil servant making contacts with the public necessarily lacks qualities and knowledge that a trained professional social worker has. The case remains to be proved, and even then it would be necessary to show (1) why the student of social subjects at the universities should not compete with students from the other faculties at the Administrative examinations, and (2) why, for the grades recruited at lower age levels, the established civil servant should not be able to receive adequate training in social work where that is needed.

In thus dealing so summarily with proposals that have had considerable publicity it is not intended to condemn out of hand the entry into the Civil Service at higher age levels of persons with specialised knowledge and experience which is not available within the Service. Arrangements have always been made for such appointments and, provided the Civil Service Commissioners are brought into the picture, the difficulties, which certainly exist, are not insurmountable. It is indeed essential that any deviation from the normal examination mode of entry should be closely scrutinised and that the credentials of such special appointees should be carefully examined, for in fact the claim for special entry is too often a claim for privilege on the part of an individual or group, and it should not be forgotten that the great virtue of the competitive system is that it affords everyone an equal chance of entry at specific times in their lives. No other profession is so

open in this respect. On the other hand it is not a virtue of the system that it should produce a sort of closed shop and it is to the advantage of everybody that there should be an interchange of talents between all sectors of the working community.

One more problem that has to be faced is that of the proper relationship between the administrator and the non-administrative specialist in the Service. This has long been a vexed question and it is partly due to the fact that there has been no general recognition that the administrator is a specialist in his own field, viz. in administration, whereas the other specialist is recruited for his particular professional knowledge. The latter may become an administrator and if administration happens to be his flair he should have every opportunity to put it to good use; but that is not the reason why he is there and it must be recognised that the more he becomes an administrator the less will his professional knowledge matter. Moreover, the administrator who lets his specialist background colour the whole picture will soon become a danger to the Service. There will, of course, be many members of the specialist classes who will become permanent officials and remain such all their lives, but the ideal would appear to be for them to regard the Civil Service sector of their profession merely as one important part of that wider professional field to which their allegiance has primarily been given. There should be a continuous flow between the official and non-official sectors. This would have the advantage of ensuring that the professional civil servant kept in close touch with the developing practices of his profession.

This brings us once again to the fringe of a new vision of the Administrative Service of the future, a professional service not confined to the central government offices but serving the whole community. These administrators would need to have studied more consistently the principles of their profession, principles towards the discovery of which a good deal of research is now being undertaken. The growth of the public corporation lends support to this idea and while it would no doubt restrict the scope of these corporations to insist that their staffs should conform religiously to the Civil Service pattern, there seems to be a good case for the initial recruitment of their Clerical-Administrative elements to be undertaken by the Civil Service Commission, although subsequent control in the case of the corporations would not be subject to Treasury edict and a public corporation would

be able to vary the terms of service to suit its own needs. There should be a common superannuation scheme and every opportunity of interchange between the different fields of public administration, viz. central, local and corporational.

Enough has been written to suggest that we are on the eve of great administrative changes and that a successful grappling with the problems arising will only be possible providing that there is a live recognition of the great needs of the future. In this sense the reorganisation of the Clerical-Executive side of the Civil Service and the introduction of certain new principles to which the latter part of this book is devoted cannot be adjudged matters of minor importance. It is certainly necessary that the individual civil servant should be given more scope for the exercise of initiative and every opportunity to use his abilities in the field in which he can make the greatest contribution to the public weal. This is implicit in the new policies as it is necessary to the success of Democracy.<sup>(1)</sup>

(1) A footnote to this Introduction will be found on page 184, together with a short reference to recent publications

The address of the Institute of Public Administration, referred to on page 24, is 18 Ashley Place, Victoria Street, London, SW1.

## PART I

### PAST DEVELOPMENTS AND PRESENT PROBLEMS

#### *C H A P T E R   O N E*

### EVOLUTION OF THE NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

WHAT IS the Civil Service? It is the heterogeneous body of persons who are engaged upon the tasks confided to the nation's civil administration. This short definition does not take us far and it will certainly help if, at the outset of this study—which is bound to present difficulties—we fix clearly in our minds the nature and function of the institution with which we are concerned.

A modern government usually has five distinct branches, viz., electorate, legislature, executive, judicature and administration. The electorate selects the legislature and contributes the main ingredients of the public opinion on which the latter's activities are based: the legislature makes the laws and selects or assists in the selection of the executive: the executive issues instructions for the carrying out of the laws and the execution of the nation's business: the judicature arbitrates on specific cases in which the law is challenged and is completely independent of the other branches of government: finally, the administration is the organisation which has the technical duty of actually carrying out the day-to-day tasks of the government. It is mainly under the control of the executive to which it looks for directions, but in a way it is the handmaiden of all the other branches of the government to which it has a sort of professional subordination. It knows thoroughly the technique of administration in its national setting: in its official capacity it is not expected to know anything else.

#### A GLANCE AT HISTORY

From what has been written it will be gathered that the administration consists of people who know how to perform the

tasks which the government requires to be performed. In the past when, more often than not, the chief governmental functions were all concentrated in the hands of an autocrat—a prince or an oligarchy—it is quite clear that it would be beyond the ruler's capacity to do his own administering, and suitable agents had to be found. They were appointed in many ways. A king might select a favourite whom he could make responsible both for getting the work done and for appointing his own assistants. The Church might produce the ambitious priest who had the necessary training in virtue of his graduation for holy orders. Offices could be put up for sale and the State's administration left to the mercies of the office-seeker, who would be concerned to extract revenue from the people and give the least possible return.

When recruitment of the public services depends upon the whim of the highest bidder, efficiency can be certain of touching its lowest ebb. As a prelude to the Reformation, the venality of the Papal bureaucracy at Rome must be regarded as a matter of primary significance. The vast army of officials required for the execution of the Papal business in many cases obtained their office by purchase and the cost was met by fees charged on the business they transacted. The practice was so lucrative that the Popes created new offices for the advantage of their own coffers. 'In 1503, to raise funds for Cesare Borgia, Alexander VI created eighty new offices and sold them for 760 ducats apiece.'<sup>(1)</sup> Such offices became personal property, transferable by sale. The result of this pernicious system was to increase to an intolerable extent the number of stages through which an item of business had to be carried, and to create a burden which Christendom soon found it impossible to endure.

The same thing happened in France. By the sale of offices the king was able to replenish his coffers and, as early as 1522, the *Bureau des Parties Casuelles* was set up to receive such payments. Inflation of offices followed, but the demand always outstripped the supply. This system led to the growth of an official nobility, for it was the easiest matter to transfer in hereditary succession an office that was considered personal property. The bureaucracy became a burden to the State and the ideal of service was foreign to its spirit. It is true that the energies of a Colbert might ensure a high degree of efficiency for a short while. The central official, the *intendant*, was appointed to carry the royal will to the

(<sup>1</sup>) *Cambridge Modern History* (H. C. Lea, 'Eve of the Reformation'), vol. i, p. 670.



localities and the unscrupulous chief minister had a powerful agent to bend the local *parlements* to his desires. But the death of a dictator invariably discloses the weaknesses of a system that depends upon his genius. And this was certainly the case with Colbert. The inevitable continuance of the venal system, already long established, assured a rapid return to a low level of administrative competence. In the case of the *intendents* a new form of recruitment became common. The increase in the complexity of their tasks led them (*circa* 1640) to appoint assistants or 'sub-delegates' and, despite the disfavour of the king, this practice continued to grow. Venality of offices was only abolished in France by the Revolution, when it is said there were as many as 300,000 offices transferable by sale.<sup>(1)</sup>

In our own country certain functions, now exclusively controlled by the State, were carried out by non-official organisations and the question of recruitment of officials was not the concern of the Government. The Customs were thus 'farmed' out by contract, the Government merely appointing an inspector to check the contractor's revenue in order that the value of the service might be correctly reassessed when a new contract was under consideration. It was not until 1671 that the Government decided to staff the whole of the Customs with civil servants. The value of the patronage is alleged to have weighed considerably in bringing about this change, for Charles II had to meet many claims for preferment from those who had supported his Restoration.

An autocracy might therefore select its administration in many ways and much would depend upon its desire and need to achieve a high standard of efficiency. There was always a danger that, with a weak ruler, the administration, in view of its privileged position and inside knowledge, might take virtual control and become a real bureaucracy. But that seldom went very far, for a new ruler would surely rise to manipulate the administration to his own ends. In times of considerable constructiveness and under an energetic ruler, an actual career service might be built up, with specially laid down methods of selection, gradings and controlled promotion precedences. We find such services being introduced in very different circumstances and epochs, e.g. by Augustus in Rome and Suleyman the Magnificent in the Ottoman

<sup>(1)</sup> See Herman Finer's *The Theory and Practice of Modern Government*, vol. ii, part vii, p. 1242.

Empire, but in the main, until modern times, administrations were usually somewhat incoherent in organisation and haphazard in selection.

With the rise of democracy a new form of venality appeared: the 'spoils' system. It could be argued that under a popular government, office should rotate among the people, and in the United States, this argument, strongly supported by President Jackson, led to the growth of the 'spoils' system whereby, after each election, offices were distributed among leading adherents of the victorious party. Obviously the constant changing of incumbents and the assignment of offices to persons for political services were bound to result in low efficiency standards and to impede the evolution of a real administrative service. So important were these 'spoils' to the maintenance of the party system in America that it is only since the inauguration of the New Deal by President Franklin Roosevelt that a decisive change has been made in the direction of building up an efficient administration.

In Britain the change came earlier under the spur of necessity. Up to the early part of the nineteenth century when the Industrial Revolution was well under way, administrative offices were still distributed by patronage methods, but Britain, unlike America, could not continue to afford the luxury of an administration in which a low standard of efficiency was accepted as inevitable, and something drastic had to be done to meet the administrative needs of the social state which had already begun to evolve. The change-over of the national economy from an expansive to an intensive stage called for the introduction of new modes of social regulation, even if under the continuing influences of *laissez-faire* the first steps in this direction were taken with great reluctance, and the principle of 'civil service' began to take shape in men's minds. It is proposed to pursue in more detail the subsequent history of this development in the next chapter and here it is sufficient to obtain a clear idea of what is really meant.

#### CIVIL SERVICE IN THE SOCIAL STATE

An autocratic ruler was always responsible for conducting his administration and capable of changing his officials if things began to go wrong: in a democracy responsibility was bound to be more diffused and the result of inefficiency likely to be more serious. The modern social state, for the expansion of which the new democracy was responsible, was also a more complicated

governmental proposition and the individual official was required to have a special competence for his job. All these factors combined in the creation of a demand for a new kind of service, a demand already forestalled by Macaulay when formulating his scheme for the recruitment of the Indian Civil Service. The new administrative service had to be impartially selected from among candidates with a minimum of competence that could be assessed impersonally. It had to be able to carry out its technical tasks efficiently without political repercussions. Finally, its members, who were servants of the State, had to have the welfare of the community in their hearts and to be able to place public weal before personal gain. Thus the new administrative service, heir to functions of government that had been variously carried out by a group of agents from times immemorial, came to constitute a new non-military branch of the executive under the democracy and to be known as the Civil Service. Briefly summarised, the requirements of the Civil Service are that it shall be impartially selected, administratively competent, politically neutral and imbued with the spirit of service to the community.

In Britain the civil servant is an agent of the civil government holding his office from the Crown to whom he swears allegiance and by whom he may be dismissed. The Civil Service is regulated by Orders in Council and only in one considerable field, namely superannuation, are the civil servant's conditions of tenure subject to Act of Parliament. A precise definition of a civil servant is not easy to formulate, but the following definition officially quoted<sup>(1)</sup> by the Treasury is probably the best we shall discover:

'Broadly, therefore, a civil servant may be defined as a servant of the Crown (not being the holder of a political or judicial office) who is employed in a civil capacity and whose remuneration is wholly paid out of moneys provided by Parliament.'

### THE ADMINISTRATOR AND HIS WORK

But we shall get a better idea of the Service if we glean something of the type of agent employed and the range of work to be performed. Let us first glance at the numerical growth of the Civil Service during the last century and a half. In 1797 it is recorded that there were 16,267 civil servants. This figure increased to a little over 21,000 in 1832, to 54,000 in 1871, to over 172,000 in 1911, and reached nearly 281,000 in 1914.

<sup>(1)</sup> See *Introductory Memoranda Relating to the Civil Service*, 63-49, 1930, Chap. I, para. 5.

During the First World War there was, naturally, another large increase, but even after the drastic cuts of the immediate post-war period, the figure stood in 1926 at 296,000. On the eve of the Second World War there were over 370,000 civil servants. None of these totals includes the considerable number of industrial workers, often classified under the Civil Service heading, who are employed by certain departments under ordinary trade conditions.

During this period the administrative organisation of the State has gradually expanded to grapple with the new tasks confided to it by Parliament. New government departments have been formed from time to time to deal with new spheres and functions and from their beginnings in the early days as mainly Whitehall clerical establishments, the new departments have often become large nation-wide organisations with agencies throughout the country and a measure of devolution from Whitehall of certain powers to regional offices; all employing many types of agent. The Post Office, Inland Revenue department, and Ministry of Labour and National Service are three departments showing the most advanced developments in this direction, since each has its own network of local offices in which it conducts its direct dealings with the public. The Ministry of Social Security, proposed in the Beveridge Report,<sup>(1)</sup> would fall into the same category. Unfortunately there is no comprehensive history of the development of the national administration and the allocation of functions can hardly be considered entirely satisfactory. It would be surprising if it were so when it is remembered that Parliament is in the habit of allocating new functions piecemeal in accordance with current convenience, as and when new legislation is called for. In the normal British fashion an empirical attitude is adopted and it has worked very well in a practical way even if it does occasionally cause the political theorist to tear his hair. Towards the end of the last war the late Lord Haldane, presiding over a Reconstruction Committee, produced an interesting Report<sup>(2)</sup> in which a rationalisation of the division of administrative functions was proposed, but little has since been done about it.

It will be seen at once that the Civil Service's work is very varied and this should be obvious from the multifarious aims of the different departments. Take, for example, the three just men-

(1) *Social Insurance and Allied Services*. Cmd. 6404, 1942.

(2) *Report of the Machinery of Government Committee*. Cmd. 9230, 1918.

tioned: the Post Office is a vast concern organised on commercial lines to supply communication services to members of the public in return for payments over the counter, but it is, in addition, a revenue collecting agency; the Inland Revenue department is concerned with collecting taxes from individuals in accordance with the law and to ensure that every individual without exception pays his legal share; while the Ministry of Labour and National Service is responsible for the efficient distribution of man-power throughout the nation's industrial and commercial system and the various fighting services, and for the payment of appropriate benefits to those workers who are for some reason or another unemployed. It is clear that such diverse functions call for the operation of different techniques and the employment of different types of personnel. But these are only a sample: besides the numerous other large departments dealing with the fighting services, social services and industries, etc., there are numerous smaller specialised offices responsible for such matters as charitable trusts, Crown lands, ecclesiastical administration, export credits, registration of births, marriages and deaths, land registration, the Royal Mint, National Debt, industrial research, and the rest. All these offices are run by civil servants of one sort or another, and this gives us some notion of the complexity of the organisation. Obviously we are not just concerned with a mass of sheltered clerks in Whitehall offices, the popular press's conception of the bureaucracy, as they invariably but erroneously call it!

Broadly, the non-industrial Service, covered by the figures quoted above, may be divided into three main groups, viz.: (1) administrative-clerical; (2) professional-technical; and (3) manipulative. The first group includes the administrators and office workers of all types; the second group includes members of most professions holding Government appointments and numerous scientists and technicians employed by the departments; while the third group consists mainly of officials who have to acquire a specialised technique of a manipulative nature, usually peculiar to Government employment and mainly in the Post Office (e.g. sorters, telephonists and telegraphists). Each group is distributed in separate classes, subjected to varying conditions of service, and within the classes there are usually separate grades.

It should be stressed that no hard and fast line of demarcation can be drawn between the Civil Service and the rest of the com-

munity: it is not only to some extent a matter of definition, but the line is a variable one and, in an expanding social economy, more and more persons may be brought within the Civil Service sphere. In some countries many other classes of officials are included, e.g. in France, teachers and policemen; in Switzerland, railway employees; in Germany, local officials. Our more restricted use of the term is in many ways preferable, at least in relation to the British Civil Service with which we are primarily concerned. And, indeed, for the purposes of this study, an even more limited definition will be adopted, which will bring us more into line with general ideas on the subject. It will be understood that the main Civil Service problem concerns the various administrative-clerical elements. In other words, we shall be dealing with 25 per cent. of those falling under the normal British conception of the Civil Service. Something more than mere limitation of space will justify this course. The problems of the other elements, especially of the professional and industrial sections, are largely problems peculiar to their several occupations and not, therefore, essentially within the public sphere. The problems of the administrative-clerical group, while not strictly confined to the Civil Service, will be found to have important elements peculiar to that sphere, while the general propositions arising will become increasingly applicable to the expanding administrative field. Furthermore, this section of the Civil Service presents the civil servant in his more typical guise since it includes roughly the people whose job, either as director or subordinate, is to run the administrative machine.

#### CIVIL SERVICE *versus* BUREAUCRACY

Later in this book we shall be concerned mainly with the personnel problems that affect the civil servant as a person in relation to the work he has to perform: we should, therefore, at this stage look more generally at some of the wider aspects of the civil servant's environment. In Britain the ideal of civil service is unalterably opposed to the spirit of bureaucracy. The parliamentary system presupposes the existence of an efficient administrative service, if an expanding system of social legislation is to be effectively developed. It is the function of the Civil Service to fulfil the will of Parliament as formulated by the Cabinet. The Cabinet works out the policy of the Government; the Civil Service sees that that policy, when duly approved by

Parliament, is faithfully executed, so far as this is humanly possible. The Civil Service is not concerned with policy and is not collectively interested in the particular politics of the Government of the day. Its duty is to organise means of administration appropriate to the objectives laid down and to act legally within the limits of the powers conceded to it. It is a neutral instrument of government. Its members only take an active part in political matters in their separate capacities as citizens, and even here there are defined limits to the extent of their participation.

To a limited extent, it is true, the Civil Service's function is to assist in the formulation of policy. It is in a strong position, owing to the permanency of its membership,<sup>(1)</sup> to give expert advice to the ministerial heads of departments and thus to define the limits within which a successful governmental policy may be laid down. The administrative élite who occupy the leading posts in the Service are the recipients of expert knowledge and their task is to determine the strictly administrative policy necessary to carry out Parliament's behests in the most effective and economical way. But both these policy-forming functions rest upon the Civil Service's technical qualifications and not upon political suppositions of any sort.

### THE CRITICS' CASE

To-day, in time of war, as we have already noted, many criticisms are being levelled against the Civil Service. It would be strange were this not so, when it is considered to what extent the activities of the Civil Service in controlling the war effort interfere with the people's liberties and daily activities. More weighty accusations have, however, been made, and a brief review of the important ones will not be out of place.

(i) The heaviest broadside directed against the Civil Service in recent years was that made by the late Lord Hewart in his much discussed book *The New Despotism*, published in 1929. His contention was that the Service, nefariously and with deep design, had been rapidly undermining the legislative power of Parliament and robbing the judiciary of its immemorial duty of deciding the legality of official decisions. Lord Hewart's chief mistake appears to have been to confuse an essential social development with a designed attack upon the vested interests of the legal profession.

<sup>(1)</sup> This function is restricted to a narrow range of higher posts. See especially H. E. Dale: *The Higher Civil Service of Great Britain* (1941).

It is perfectly true that Acts of Parliament have included the delegation of wide rule-making powers to certain ministries, with the consequent need for the setting up of administrative courts for the consideration of doubtful cases and appeals, but this is an essential factor in the development of the social state and the House of Commons, burdened with the tremendous weight of current legislation, has wisely recognised this fact.

Although a Special Committee<sup>(1)</sup> has since shown Lord Hewart's charges to be quite unfounded, it is, nevertheless, true that the whole controversy served the useful purpose of demonstrating the necessity of the new development and of making clear what safeguards were desirable in order to maintain the ultimate legislative integrity of Parliament. The Civil Service had new tasks to perform, new functional burdens to bear: it was essential that its grave sense of responsibility should not be undermined.

(ii) Another pungent comment on the problem of the Civil Service in relation to policy came from a more friendly critic: Professor Laski, in his *Democracy in Crisis*, maintained that the present parliamentary system could only subsist so long as the two main parties agreed to differ. Professor Laski was inclined to the view that when a fundamental break came—and sooner or later such a break was inevitable—the constitutionalists would do everything but concede the inevitable changes constitutionally. War between the two sections would ensue, and one of the strong factors on the side of the conservative elements would be the Civil Service, which in the last resort would refuse to work the new socialist régime. This argument was well in line with the Marxist theory of political development so popular in those days, when the world still considered itself able to afford the luxury of theorising instead of getting on with the very considerable job of building the new civilisation which the Scientific Revolution had rendered possible. Assuming the situation then postulated by Professor Laski and the continued existence of the Civil Service as a functioning institution—something of a paradox, it must be admitted—there is no shred of evidence to suggest that the British Civil Service would suddenly have shed its attitude of neutrality and entered the political arena. Rather should we conclude, on the evidence, that any practicable measures planned by the new Government would have been loyally implemented. However, the continued existence of the Civil Service in a revo-

<sup>(1)</sup> *Report of Committee on Minister's Powers*. Cmd. 4060.



lutionary situation would have meant the continuance of a stabilising element which in itself would have rendered the hypothetical revolution incomplete. So that Professor Laski's diagnosis, if it led anywhere, led to the conclusion that the radical needed not to subvert the armed forces but to undermine the foundations of the Civil Service—the one organisation that could render the revolutionist's practical policies effective.

(iii) A criticism more recently adumbrated is that arrangements for watching over and promoting the efficient and economic organisation of the Civil Service as a whole have not been very vigorously implemented. This matter has been very carefully reviewed by the Select Committee on National Expenditure (1941-42) who, in their Sixteenth Report, recommend that in future the subject should be given more continuous attention. They propose that a special Parliamentary Committee should be set up to supervise Civil Service affairs, that the work of the 'methods and organisation' branches in the Treasury and various departments should be considerably extended and that a staff college should be introduced to train selected members of the Service in efficiency methods. These proposals indicate some of the changes in the Civil Service that are already under consideration, and, quite apart from their intrinsic merit—it is, of course, not yet certain that they will all be implemented—they indicate the urgency with which the Civil Service organisation is being reviewed in authoritative quarters under the impact of current needs.

(iv) The last criticism warranting inclusion here is a general one falling under the heading of 'red tape'. It is suggested that the activities of the State are necessarily tortuous and that the Civil Service not only uses too many forms but is slow-moving and chary of coming to a decision. This is a wide subject needing a special investigation of its own, but there is really no convincing evidence that the Civil Service is a bad example under this heading. To a certain extent roundabout methods are a feature of all large-scale organisation, and as such are inevitable, but the economies obtained are more than sufficient to offset such disadvantages, providing always that such methods are reduced to a minimum. Obviously this is a field in which improvements are always possible and the gentle breath of criticism should never be stilled. We should not forget, however, that the critic is too often personally concerned in disproving the merit of State enter-

prise and that the democracy's first duty to itself is to be well-informed about the efficient working of its own political institutions. For this reason alone a wider knowledge of Civil Service problems needs to be disseminated and this can only occur if a more widespread interest manifests itself.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF ADMINISTRATION

The function of the Civil Service is, as we have already indicated, to administer. Administration is an all-pervasive art, the directive organisation of human affairs, whether performed by the primitive tribal leader, the slave-owner of ancient Rome, the modest housewife or the modern statesman. It provides, in a way, the cement of social organisation. It is so eminently a practical activity that its scientific basis has never been adequately investigated. Its existence has always been taken for granted and the constant appearance in history of individuals with a genius for administering created the impression that the nurturing of such faculties was neither possible nor desirable. But to-day the demand is insistent and urgent. The increasing complexity of social life renders the extension of the supply of administrative talent imperative if civilisation is to continue its advancement. More will be said on this topic in our final chapter. What is important here is a recognition of the technical aspect of the civil servant's function. It is only unique in so far as it relates to the sphere of the State, a sphere in which special conditions endow it with particular qualities and present it with special problems. Elsewhere, especially in the field of public utility enterprise and of vast commercial undertaking, the need for an efficient administration is just as urgently felt and with the increase of the size and the co-operative element in organisations of this type the problems of administration steadily tend to approximate to those of the State service. Here is one vitally important reason for a more widespread study of the public service field.

#### THE MAINTENANCE OF ENTERPRISE

In a democracy the critical problem of the Civil Service is not its tendency towards bureaucracy, which can be defeated by wise legislative enactment and sufficient judicial supervision, but the fact that it presents a widening social field from which the normal competitive relationship between individuals has been

eliminated or relegated to a position of little importance. The need for a neutral attitude in the contacts between the State and its servants, a need springing primarily from the urgent demand that appointments should be made without reference to personal predilections or political affiliations on the part of the appointing authority, lies at the basis of this special characteristic of the public service field. And when it is remembered that consequently a civil servant must be financially recompensed not for his individual services but because he is a member of a well-defined staff category, it is not difficult to understand why the perennial stimulus of private enterprise is absent. Not that all men work merely for financial reward or that their efforts can be nicely assessed in terms of monetary supply and demand. But it is evident that, despite the personal examples of certain outstanding individuals, the mass of human beings produce the highest standards of energy and enterprise where the stimulus of adequate and appropriate reward is in existence. Nor is this weakening of personal stimulus nowadays a condition peculiar to the government service. In all large organisations the rationalisation of personnel processes leads to an increasing degree of anonymity in the offering of inducement to personal effort. Wherever the controlling personalities find it impossible to exercise their own judgment over the whole of the field with which they are actively concerned they have to face the problem of discovering alternative methods and even if, as a first step, they merely delegate their selective functions, they will already have made an inevitable advance in the direction of more complete systematisation. The chief difference between the large private organisation and the government department will remain in the greater concentration of responsibility in the former, with a consequent ability to take more particular and decisive decisions whenever the need may arise.

But if we accept the expansion of the social state as an inevitable trend (less, perhaps, in the direction of the socialist state than in that of the socialised community), and as, certainly, a preferable alternative to the breakdown of the present system, we are faced with the danger of ultimate failure through the elimination of the priceless driving power of personal initiative. It was one of the strongest claims of the *laissez-faire* school that without the free play of competition between individuals future progress could not be guaranteed. To-day it is realised that the pure doctrine of

*laissez-faire* does not fit the facts of the situation. We are faced by a new complexity.

Nevertheless the ideals underlying the individualist doctrines may still be necessary to a socialised system. A two-fold development may be called for: first, competition predominantly between individuals will become competition predominantly between groups and social units organised on a semi-federal basis; second, new methods of maximising individual enterprise within these units will need to be invented. This second objective is one which the Civil Service is particularly fitted to explore and it will be argued later that the aim of eliminating much of the deadening effect of the depersonalising element in staff organisation is a practicable one.

Enough has been said to demonstrate the importance, in the development of modern civilisation, of the Civil Service as an instrument of social organisation. It is now proposed to touch rapidly upon the historic development of the State service in Great Britain. This will give a correct perspective in which to examine current Civil Service problems.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE BRITISH CIVIL SERVICE—1853-1939

WE HAVE already seen how in Britain the 'farming' of the Customs was only dropped in 1671, but for the best part of another two hundred years Government offices were to remain the perquisites of those who had the political power to place them at the disposal of their friends and clients: nor was anything else to be expected in light of the fact that it was not until the electoral reforms of 1832, when the old landed order finally made way for the new industrial régime, that the patronage represented by the system of 'rotten' boroughs was at last swept away.

The history of the British Civil Service really begins in 1853 with the inauguration of the Macaulay reforms for the recruitment of the Indian Service.<sup>(1)</sup> The adoption of the practice of setting tests of high university standard in subjects of a cultural academic type, so vigorously and effectively recommended by Macaulay, set an indelible mark upon the later system of recruitment in England; so that, even to-day, the highest Civil Service examinations differ little from those which Macaulay prescribed.

At that time, however, the administrative machinery of Great Britain was still in a primitive stage of integration and the personnel of the various departments had little claim to the dignity of being considered a 'service'. Patronage methods, except in one or two offices, were in evidence in the making of appointments, and conditions of employment varied considerably. There had been little effort to differentiate between the types of duties. The calibre of the staff varied: if patronage permitted the occasional entry of brilliant men, as indeed might well happen where the wielder of the patronage had a high sense of responsibility to the community, in the main, standards of efficiency were very low. But the need for increased efficiency was not yet accepted as axiomatic, and this is not surprising when it is remembered that the great changes of the Victorian era were hardly yet within the social horizon.

(<sup>1</sup>) Government of India Act, 1853 (16 & 17 Vic. c. 95).

## 1853—TREVELYAN—NORTHCOTE PROPOSALS

Democratic thought, however, coloured men's visions. Coupled with a vivid feeling of Imperial responsibility, this was sufficient to ensure a wide support for Lord Macaulay's excellent proposals—when applied to a distant Empire: but when it came to the application of similar principles to the Home Administration the enthusiasm was less pronounced. There was considerable opposition within the country to even minor proposals of reform. In the same year Sir Charles Trevelyan and Sir Stafford Northcote presented their famous report<sup>(1)</sup> and it is recorded that

'Sarcasm, ridicule and gloomy prophecies of evil assailed them. Forceful and weighty expressions of conservative opinion, bigoted intolerance of change, and stupid pride in the existing Service were powerfully represented.'<sup>(2)</sup>

The Report proposed the division of the Service into two classes: one, for the intellectual work, recruited from men between the ages of 19 and 25; the other, for the purely mechanical work, recruited from men between the ages of 17 and 19. Open competition was prescribed. Promotion from the lower class to the higher was to take place only in exceptional instances. The ideal of a real Service was to be achieved by the breaking down of the barriers between the departments. But the Report went beyond the bounds of immediate practicability and it was many years before any real progress could be achieved. Since, however, it was clearly in this matter the first step that was important, the setting up of the Civil Service Commission by Order in Council of May, 1855, was an event of great moment. The Commission's major task was to supervise the examination of all candidates for the Civil Service. This new piece of political machinery was destined shortly to remove from the influences of patronage the appointment of all officials and at the same time to present a model for other nations to copy. For the time being a system of pass-examinations was introduced: each Governmental office still retained its own tests, and it was possible to get a nominee through the examination by the simple expedient of at the same time nominating two 'fools' who were bound to fail!

The agitation for more radical reforms followed its unhurried course. What it lacked, however, in volume it made up in both perseverance and sincerity. Other investigators entered the field, John Bright among them, and changes in the examination

(1) *Report on the Organisation of the Permanent Civil Service.*

(2) Robert Moses: *The Civil Service of Great Britain* (1914).

methods were made. A Select Committee in 1860 more or less endorsed the proposals of 1853 but made it clear that it visualised the need for different capacities in different departments.<sup>(1)</sup> It proposed that entrants should be employed on routine duties in the early years of their service, care being taken to ensure that selection should be made with their later duties in view, and that appropriate educational standards should be prescribed.

At last the weight of informed opinion had its way: in 1870 the Treasury, by Order in Council, abolished patronage and adopted the principle of recruitment by 'open competition'. At the same time, the two-class organisation proposed in the Report of 1853 was introduced. Not all the departments, however, were willing to take the Class I men and consequently in those departments which refused, Class II clerks were employed on the higher duties. The ideal of a unified Service was yet far from achievement, although an important step in the right direction had now been taken. '

#### 1874-75—PLAYFAIR COMMISSION

In 1874 the Playfair Commission<sup>(2)</sup> was appointed to inquire into the selection and grading of civil servants, the principle of transfer from office to office, and the employment of writers and temporary clerks. Its recommendations more or less confirmed the two-class Service already adopted, but there were to be some interesting developments. Recruitment of the higher division was to take place at the age of 17 by means of a preliminary test examination: this was to be followed by a second examination, more specialised and competitive, but of a lower standard than the first. Final selection would, even then, remain in the hands of heads of departments and a successful candidate would remain eligible only until his 25th birthday. This part of the Report was retrogressive—not only proposing to reduce the previous modest standards but also to reintroduce patronage—and naturally it was not found acceptable.

The recommendations in regard to the lower division were, however, of a different calibre and bore some relationship to the expanding needs of the State. It was proposed that the lower division should be further divided into two grades, of men and boy clerks respectively; the latter to be recruited between the

<sup>(1)</sup> *Report from the Select Committee on Civil Service Appointments* (1860).

<sup>(2)</sup> *Civil Service (Playfair) Inquiry Commission* (1875).

ages of 15 and 17 and not to be retained in employment beyond 19 years unless a special entrance test to the adult class were passed. In order to cover the widening range of office work of a routine nature, unsuitable for officers of longer service, a new principle was proposed which, if it met the difficulties of the moment, was destined to generate its own grave problems within the next half-century. Below these main grades there were to be men and boy copyists, employed on copying and routine work under direct supervision and paid on piecework principles wherever possible. It was also proposed that certain special duties at the top of the lower division ranges should carry an additional allowance: a foreshadowing of the assignment of staff posts to each different class, as was adopted in later Service classifications. In 1876 the more acceptable parts of this Report were promulgated, including, be it noted, the introduction of boy clerks and boy copyists to carry out the minor routine work.

#### 1886—RIDLEY COMMISSION

There was little change in the Service organisation during the next decade and nothing was done to co-ordinate the higher division posts. The departments remained a law unto themselves in these matters, subject, of course, to Treasury approval. The time was ripe therefore in 1886 for the setting up of the Ridley Commission which laboured to good purpose until 1890 and produced a series of reports<sup>(1)</sup> that were destined to be accepted as the basis of Civil Service organisation until the end of the First World War and to merit even to-day careful consideration for many of the principles they enunciated. The two-class Service was again endorsed but important changes were recommended. The Higher Division, henceforth to be called the First Division, was to be reduced in size and recruited only from candidates of first-class university standards. The duties to which the First Division was to be assigned were visualised as managerial in type, as opposed to the purely clerical duties carried out by the Lower Division, and the class was to be divided into three distinct grades, with progressive scales of pay. It was recommended that the Lower Division, henceforth to be known as the Second Division, should be recruited by an examination of the type appropriate for ordinary commercial clerkships. The employment of copyists was condemned and it was proposed that their duties should be

<sup>(1)</sup> *Reports from the Royal (Ridley) Commission on Civil Establishments* (1887 to 1889).



transferred to the Second Division and the boy clerks, while more typists were to be introduced.

These proposals were gradually adopted, with certain modifications. The Second Division examination was eventually changed to an academic test of higher standard, and a class of staff posts above the Second Division was introduced. The Treasury minute on the Ridley proposals asserted that 'wherever necessary, groups of men below the Second Division, e.g. for statistical abstraction, will be employed, but a general class will not be created'. Future developments were to prove that the new system, good as it undoubtedly was, had not the flexibility to enable it to respond to the changes brought about by the continued application of the principle of the division of labour to an expanding administrative sphere.

#### 1912-15—MACDONNELL COMMISSION

During the next twenty years three new classes were introduced in the administrative-clerical field, viz. (1) women clerks (mainly in the Post Office) to perform certain large blocks of routine work which it was considered could be equally well carried out by women as by men and at a consequent lower cost, since women were paid less; (2) assistant clerks, to create an outlet for the boy clerks who, although of a high educational standard, were too numerous to contribute more than a small proportion of their number as successful candidates through the Second Division examination; and (3) an intermediate class, which was employed in those offices where there was work in the higher ranges considered too good for the Second Division but not good enough for the First Division, especially in accounting and tax departments. It will be gathered that the time was ripe for a new comprehensive investigation of the Civil Service organisation when the MacDonnell Commission was appointed. Unfortunately, the Commission's reports were appearing on the eve of the war<sup>(1)</sup> and the advent of cataclysm relegated the question of Civil Service reform to the background.

The exigencies of war altered the whole shape of the administrative machine: the normal methods of readjustment were largely superseded in face of the great influx of staff, needed not only to meet the inevitable expansion of the Service, but also to replace the large percentage of the permanent staff that went (often

<sup>(1)</sup> *Reports from Royal (MacDonnell) Commission on the Civil Service (1912-15).*

without any great encouragement from the harassed officials at the top) into the armed forces. Not only were the high pre-war standards of the Civil Service inevitably lowered by this substitution of untrained for trained officials (including a large number of women who had previously had little or no experience of office work), but in many respects quite different principles were introduced by the 'business' leaders who came into the Service to direct the new wartime ministries. In a few months the Service was changed as only a revolutionary upheaval could have changed it.

The new wartime Service was not, in relation to the exigencies of the period, necessarily a better or a worse Service. It was different, and consequently the findings of the MacDonnell Commission were inapplicable to the new conditions. Nevertheless, although the Civil Service could not be expected to return after the war to the precise spot at which the Commission had found it, the general principles by which it had been organised were so sound that the war eventually marked a strange interlude rather than a radical break in Civil Service history. For this reason alone the Commission's main proposals are worthy of consideration.

The old two-class organisation, long since superseded in practice, was to be replaced by a three-class organisation, in which the administrative sphere would be divided into a senior and junior class, separately recruited and each having a series of staff posts, with higher scales of pay, at the top. The senior clerical class would perform the duties of the existing intermediate class and the better work of the Second Division, while the rest of the Second Division's work and the duties hitherto carried out by assistant clerks and boy clerks would be assigned to the junior clerical class. It was proposed that the new classes should be 'Service' classes in the widest sense of the term and that they should supersede wherever possible the various departmental classes which had grown up to meet the special needs, real or imagined, of particular departments. There would be avenues of promotion between the main classes but this would clearly become an exceptional rather than a normal occurrence. One very important principle was discussed at length: the need to synchronise the Service structure with the educational system. There must be avenues through which those trained in the different educational establishments—university, secondary, and elementary—could

flow direct from school into the Service. The Service had need, in varying degrees, of all the talents, and the staff organisation must permit of their absorption in the right proportions. The problem of recruiting these right proportions would necessarily condition the future Service organisation as a whole. It is true that hitherto the need for university talents had been generally accepted. Lord Macaulay's original thesis remained unchallengeable, but the necessity of further differentiating the types of clerical ability needed by the Service had not previously been so incisively stated. We now have the vision of a three-class Service recruited from three different educational levels and designed to perform as many different kinds of administrative and clerical work. Each class would have its own hierarchy and whatever hierarchic relationship might remain between the three classes would be determined, not by the need for subordination so much as by the new principles of division of labour it was now proposed to apply. This was an ideal, and the range of its practicability will appear more clearly under later examination, but it should be remarked here that, despite the proposed avenues of promotion, this scheme enshrined more clearly than ever the caste principle against which all administrative structures need strenuously to be guarded.

#### REFORM AFTER THE WAR OF 1914-18

With the conclusion of the war and the rapid replacement of temporary wartime officers by the permanent officials returning from the armies, coupled with the urgency of making up the leeway lost by the virtual suspension of ordinary promotions during the war, the question of reorganisation became one of the first importance. The Gladstone Committee in 1918 proposed a structure not dissimilar to that outlined in the MacDonnell Reports. In its report it recognised the need to fit the new organisation to a changing administrative environment. Thus, it attempted to evolve a changeable hierarchy of class suitable, in different combinations, for the diverse needs of the different ministries, and it suggested the introduction of a female clerical class to substitute the existing male class in certain instances. Although less symmetrical in shape than previous schemes this one was more closely related to the practical problems then in the forefront of men's minds.

But the Gladstone Committee's findings were inevitably overshadowed by an event of unique importance: the appointment,

through the recently formed National Whitley Council, of a Reorganisation Committee to consider and propose what steps were deemed necessary to bring the Civil Service into line with post-war conditions. This Committee consisted of members of the official and of the staff sides of the National Council, officials of higher and lower rank, and this was the first time that the Service had been specifically requested to formulate plans for its own improvement. It was in many ways a committee of experts, and if of interested experts, it is all the more remarkable that their report, issued on 17th February, 1920, should have been so statesmanlike and have enshrined so many ideally desirable proposals. Its proposals were adopted and subsequent changes have all been minor ones.

#### PROBLEMS AND PRINCIPLES OF REORGANISATION

Before describing the administrative-clerical section of the Civil Service as it is to-day, it will be useful to re-examine the period of development just outlined, in order to appreciate the difficulties by which the Reorganisation Committee were faced. It is obvious at the outset that the rapidity with which the nation had been changing during the period under review had made the task of building a stable administrative organisation a very difficult one, and in the various solutions offered the introduction of a system of classes and grades, each largely self-contained, had inculcated a static element which had rendered early revision both necessary and difficult. In the absence, within the Constitution, of a permanent element both competent and willing to be responsible for carrying out the essential adjustments as the need arose, recourse was had to the expedient of setting up at intervals Royal Commissions thoroughly to investigate and report upon the current situation. This was a safe if somewhat dilatory method, for it was usually some years before a Commission's proposals were adopted.

Not only had the investigating committee to fit the new organisation to a changing social environment; it had also to cast it into such a form that it could take full advantage of the principle of division of labour. It had to consider on one hand the expanding functions of the Central Government and on the other the increasing efficiency of a growing educational system which, during each succeeding generation, made available a larger pool of technical ability. The difficulty was to evolve a system capable

of absorbing an inflow of all the talents but impervious to the grave dangers inherent in a caste system.

The Reorganisation Committee confronted this task with an inside knowledge of the deep necessities of the situation. That their solution has had more than an ephemeral success is indicated by the fact that the Tomlin Commission, which reported in 1931, could find little to criticise in their construction which, with one important modification referred to below, constitutes substantially the present organisation of the Civil Service. In summarising the general approach to the problem it would be difficult to improve upon the Committee's own words:

'The administrative and clerical work of the Civil Service may be said, broadly, to fall into two main categories. In one category may be placed all such work as either is of a simple mechanical kind or consists in the application of well-defined regulations, decisions and practice to particular cases; in the other category, the work which is concerned with the formation of policy, with the revision of existing practice or current regulations and decisions, and with the organisation and direction of the business of Government.

For work so different in kind it is clearly necessary to secure more than one type of agent. Qualifications adapted to the performance of the simplest kind of work would be unequal to the discharge of the highest kind of work; and it would be impossible to justify the employment on simple mechanical duties of persons capable of performing the highest duties. After the most careful consideration we have agreed that, in order properly to provide for the work falling within two main categories, it will be necessary to employ not less than four different classes, viz.:

- (a) A Writing Assistant Class for simple mechanical work.
  - (b) A Clerical Class for the better sort of work included in the first main category defined above.
  - (c) An Executive Class; and
  - (d) An Administrative Class
- } for the work included in the second main category defined above.'

### THE CIVIL SERVICE TO-DAY

At the top of the new hierarchy stands the administrative class, which took the place of the old first division. The class is divided into grades known generally as assistant principals, principals, assistant secretaries and principal assistant secretaries, and the lowest, or assistant principal grade, is recruited from university graduates between the ages of 21 and 24<sup>(1)</sup>. There is a wide range of academic subjects in the examination, but the standard is so high and the competition so severe that only graduates with first-class or good second-class honours degrees have any real hope of qualifying. As the lowest grade is considered to be a cadet or

(1) 22 was the lower age up to 1937.

training grade, its numbers are kept reasonably low in order that all members may have opportunities of promotion at an early age. In theory the members of this class constitute a pool available for all the different departments and although entrants from the open competitions are given a choice of office (as far as is practicable) their future line of advancement may lead them in any official direction. The class is also recruited by promotion from the executive and clerical classes, and, very occasionally, from the professional classes.

The duties of this grade are

‘those concerned with the formation of policy, with the co-ordination and improvement of Government machinery, and with the general administration and control of the Departments of the Public Service.’

It is no exaggeration to state that, in view of the importance of its functions, this is the key class of the whole Civil Service, the class which contributes decisively to the great reputation in which the British Administration is held throughout the world, and if in later chapters certain criticisms are offered, as indeed they are bound to be, it must not be forgotten that the standard of reference is a very high one.<sup>(1)</sup>

For the higher work of supply and accounting departments and of other executive and specialised branches of the Civil Service, i.e. the work previously performed by the intermediate class, the second division and certain smaller groups, the executive class was introduced. This class is recruited partly from young men and women between the ages of 18 and 19 by means of an open competitive examination of a type and standard calculated to obtain recruits of a higher secondary school level, and partly by promotion from the clerical class.

To quote the Reorganisation Committee again, the work of this class

‘covers a wide field, requires in different degrees qualities of judgment, initiative and resource. In the junior ranks it comprises the critical examination of particular cases of lesser importance not clearly within the scope of approved regulations or general decisions, initial investigations into matters of higher importance, and the immediate direction of small blocks of business. In its upper ranges it is concerned with matters of internal organisation and control, with the settlement of broad questions arising out of business in hand or in contemplation, and with the responsible conduct of important operations.’

The class is divided into grades and it was intended that the

(1) A recent book by H. E. Dale gives a masterly account of the top grades of the administrative class, viz.: *The Higher Civil Service of Great Britain* (1941).

lowest grade should constitute a training grade, the members of which should be given a wide experience of different duties preparatory to advancement to higher executive posts. But two factors militated against the consummation of this project, viz. the long salary scale of the grade and the high percentage of lower posts in many departments. As a consequence it is only in specialised offices that this intention has been fulfilled.

This brings us to the clerical class which, with the closely allied grade of clerical assistants, constitutes what one might consider the working class of the administrative section of the Service. Its duties are officially described as

‘dealing with particular cases in accordance with well-defined regulations, instructions on general practice; scrutinising, checking and cross-checking straightforward accounts, claims, returns, etc., under well-defined instructions; preparation of material for returns, accounts, and statistics in prescribed forms; simple drafting and précis work; collection of material on which judgments can be formed; supervision of the work of clerical assistants.’

The clerical class is recruited mainly by open competitive examination of intermediate secondary school standard from among young men and women between the ages of 16 and 17, but partly by promotion from the clerical assistant and shorthand-typist grades. There are also special limited competitions for members of the manipulative grades of the Service. The class is employed in practically all the ministries and there is a grade of higher clerical officers to perform supervisory duties and tasks of an individual nature similar in type to those of the junior executive grade. In offices where there are no higher executive posts, senior clerical posts are introduced to afford an avenue of promotion and to carry out the higher managerial duties.

Whereas the classes so far described are open equally to men and women, the next class which comes under consideration, the clerical assistants, is open only to women. The reason for this will be made clear in a moment. The class was set up at reorganisation in 1921, under the title of writing assistants, to carry out the routine clerical work of the Service, e.g. work preliminary to machine operations, hand copying and transcribing, the addressing of letters, the writing up of simple cards, the custody of card indexes, etc. Work of this nature was previously carried out by boy clerks, a ‘blind alley’ grade, the employment of which had been subjected to much justified criticism; for it took into the service of the State a large number of youths with a secondary

school education and ejected into the labour market, at the vital ages of 19 or 20, a considerable surplus which could not be absorbed through the ordinary examination avenues of the assistant clerks and second division classes. If the large volume of routine work, inseparable from the administrative sphere, was to be carried out by a permanent grade, it was decided that a female class should now be introduced. Not only was it generally held that women were, if anything, more competent on this sort of work, but their relative cheapness and their considerable outflow for marriage presented just the conditions of employment that were needed.

Nevertheless, it was in this field that the chief changes subsequently took place—both on the social side, in the continuing emancipation of women, and on the technical side, in the mechanisation of office work—and the Tomlin Commission recommended that the work and pay of the class should be extended in accordance with the new conditions. These proposals were implemented in 1936 when the original title of writing assistants was changed and the scale of pay was extended. The original reasons for confining the class to women have thus been weakened and a demand has been made that boys should be permitted to sit the examination. At present the examination is open to girls between the ages of 16 and 17: it is of a simple nature, suitable for scholars of a higher elementary standard, but the competition has hitherto been so keen that girls from the secondary schools have obtained the majority of posts. Unlike the other classes the clerical assistants are not divided into grades. The avenue of promotion leads through the main clerical class. There are also special classes to carry out the typing work of the Service.

The classes just described are usually known as the Treasury classes. They are not all employed in each department. In fact, the staff groupings vary considerably throughout the Service. Some offices have an administrative-clerical establishment, others an executive-clerical establishment, in some both administrative and executive class officers are employed; in some there are no clerical assistants; there are a number of departments where the directing class is a professional or technical group. Certain offices, especially those dealing with a special administrative technique, and notably the Customs and Excise and Inland Revenue departments and the Ministry of Labour, have classes specially



recruited by means of examinations designed to select recruits with the appropriate talents and qualifications.

Consideration of these carefully planned hierarchies of classes may create an impression of exclusiveness which is certainly not borne out in practice. The ideal division of labour cannot be precisely defined, so that in any case a hide-bound system would be doomed to failure. In practice the boundaries between the classes are indefinite and vary considerably as between the different ministries. There is a constant flow of officers from one class to another; if there is any criticism to be made on this score, it is that the flow is indiscriminate and subject to fortuitous circumstances. Equality of opportunity is far from being achieved.

¶ The Civil Service is centrally recruited through the Civil Service Commission and centrally controlled by the Treasury, which is the mouthpiece of the Government in relation to the administration and constitutes the legislative authority for the Civil Service as a whole. By the issue of Orders in Council, general regulations and instructions and, above all, in virtue of its financial control and its moral power as the spokesman of authority, the Treasury supplies the chief co-ordinating element to an administration which aims at combining the advantage of centralisation with the virtue of sectional autonomy. ¶ But the combination is, perhaps, not quite perfect. Each ministry has grown from its own peculiar beginnings and there is a diversity of organisation and practice which sometimes overshadows the advantages of independent development. Certain offices, for example, are staffed with departmental classes whose terms of employment are less favourable in some respects than those of the Treasury classes.

In 1936 this situation led to a minor revolt in the lower grades and a favourable decision by the Arbitration Court, which brought the departmental classes more closely in line with the rest of the Service. Under the influence of the doctrine of Ministerial responsibility, it is the custom of the Treasury to leave a wide sphere of discretion to heads of departments; time-honoured prejudices are sympathetically viewed and it is often difficult to achieve that uniformity of organisation which would enable a true equality of treatment to be attained. ¶ It is correct to state that the British Civil Service is a Service in allegiance but something less than a Service in its general scheme of organisation. ¶

## CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

In regard to general conditions of employment,<sup>(1)</sup> the British civil servant enjoys a reasonably high standard, though not necessarily in all respects in advance of those in comparable occupations in the outside world. It has been claimed that the Government should be a model employer, and in a democratic state this is clearly an ideal to be pursued. While admitting the logic of this contention, which quite naturally receives the full-hearted support of the governmental staffs, it has in the main been construed as meaning that a fair relativity should be maintained between the conditions of State service and of private enterprise. The Government should lead but not too strenuously—with much reasonableness it is argued that those who have to pay the piper should not be expected to clothe him in finer raiment than they themselves can afford.

In what we may call the lesser amenities of employment, such as annual holidays and sick leave privileges, the civil servant is undoubtedly better off than his business-world colleague.<sup>(2)</sup> In regard to security of employment and superannuation privileges he has little to grumble at, although it must not be overlooked that similar conditions now rule in comparable outside organisations, such as the banks and insurance companies. Legally the civil servant in this country receives his superannuation privileges only upon the completion of his full term of service at the age of 60, for the system does not rest upon a contributory basis, and voluntary retirement at an earlier date forfeits all claim to pension. Early retirement on the grounds of ill-health is, of course, accompanied by a proportional allocation of pension. Security of tenure rests entirely upon usage: the civil servant has no legal right to retention until the normal retirement age. Such retention depends upon the continued existence of his official office, although, in practice, in the case of a member of a general grade a post would certainly be found elsewhere in the case of abolition of the duties on which he was employed. Compulsory retirement because of abolition of office would no doubt be accompanied by the grant of a pension based upon the length of the officer's service. An interesting sidelight upon the peculiar nature of the civil servant's terms of tenure is reflected by the

<sup>(1)</sup> See Appendix 2, p. 152.

<sup>(2)</sup> This is not the case in wartime, when many privileges have been voluntarily relinquished.

power of dismissal for delinquency or inefficiency which rests entirely with the head of the department. There is no appeal against his decision. It speaks volumes for the excellent spirit and atmosphere of goodwill that, despite this somewhat autocratic element in its organisation, there is no strong demand in the Civil Service for the whole matter to be placed upon a more logical basis. In effect, the number of dismissals is not great and there is no evidence of any tendency to victimisation. In this case, as in so many others, active goodwill is more important than theoretical justice.

It is, however, by their standards of remuneration that the civil servant's conditions of service may best be assessed, for it is mainly by this means that the controlling authority can vary the attractiveness of the Service and so influence the number and, more importantly, the quality of competitors at the examinations. Government employees are not essentially a well-paid group, for their wage standards are an easy prey to the politician and the more voluble vested interests in times of depression. We are, fortunately, only concerned here with the administrative-clerical section and about this it can be said that the standards of the lower grades are on the average high, in comparison with outside employments, but that these standards decline steadily as we rise in the hierarchic scale; so that those at the top, on whom the welfare of the nation depends so much, are remunerated at rates very much below those in posts of similar importance and responsibilities elsewhere, both in private and semi-official organisations. If the clerical labour is reasonably well-paid, it must not therefore be concluded that it is over-paid, for the civil servant is a carefully selected person who is required to conform to high standards of conduct and to be endowed with special qualifications. In adopting the Government service as a livelihood, he selects a comfortable and somewhat uneventful career and he sacrifices all chance of achieving riches. In assessing his remuneration, such factors need to be taken carefully into account and to be balanced with the advantageous conditions of service which have already been mentioned.

The officials of the higher grades are, in view of their comparatively low salaries (posts ranging above £1,500 are few and far between), clearly influenced by something other than the pecuniary worth of their positions. They are perhaps to some extent attracted by the security of their lives, but they must, if

they are to achieve some measure of success, be strongly imbued with the ideal of service to their fellow men. In many respects, then, the Civil Service presents an epitome of what the greater world should be; there are narrower extremes of income and a less selfish spiritual drive. There is, of course, another side of the question, which will be touched upon in later chapters.

#### EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN

In our survey of the general conditions of the Civil Service we ought not to overlook the important problem of the employment of women.<sup>(1)</sup> Before the first World War women had already entered the clerical sphere; there was a class of women clerks, employed in offices where large blocks of suitable work existed. The principle of segregation was adopted, for these clerks were always employed in sections separated from the male branches and had their own female supervisory officers. After the war the main classes were thrown open to both sexes (although the influx of women was held up for some years by the strenuous efforts made to absorb large numbers of ex-Service men) and the principle of aggregation, or the employment of officers on the same types of work and in the same branches irrespective of their sex, was generally adopted. Certain grades, it is true, are still confined to one sex or the other—e.g. the typists and clerical assistants, as all-women grades on the one hand; the Customs and Excise officers, as an all-male grade on the other—but the general policy is to restrict such grades as far as possible to those duties for which one sex is supposed to have an advantage over the other. There is little doubt that in the future this particular specialised field will meet with further restrictions, for the movement towards sex equality is running strongly within the Service.

There is, however, the vexed question of equal pay. The Treasury, in accordance with its general policy, has adopted the principle endorsed by the practice of the commercial world of fixing the salary scales of its women servants at a lower level than that of the men in the same grade. In the Service the movement to abolish this situation receives widespread support not only from the women, who are actively interested, but by the men who argue that with equal pay the competition from the women, 'undercutting' as it is termed, will be eliminated. This argument is fallacious—even if the main assumption on which it is based,

<sup>(1)</sup> See H. Martindale's *Women Servants of the State* (1938).

viz. that women are less desirable clerks than men, is admitted (and such an assumption is unwarranted)—when applied to a Service recruited through competitive examinations at which both sexes are given equal opportunities to compete. In fact, the one way to change the balance in the women's favour (they obtained fewer successes in the mixed examinations than the men) is to offer them more attractive terms of remuneration in order to increase their participation in the competitions. But the case for equal pay is so reasonable on the face of it, and the slogan 'equal pay for equal work' appeals so effectively to one's sense of fair play, that it would be too much to expect that the interested parties should consider the probable social consequences of their policy.<sup>(1)</sup>

One further problem of the employment of women in the Service arises in the shape of the marriage bar.<sup>(2)</sup> It is within the power of a department, with the consent of the Treasury, to retain, in an established capacity, the services of a woman civil servant who marries, if such retention is adjudged to be to the advantage of the State; but in practice women civil servants are expected to retire on marriage, and this particular inequality appears to have the support of the majority of their female colleagues! Subject to certain qualifying conditions a marriage gratuity is granted to such officers upon resignation. As we have already noted, this marriage turnover is administratively useful in the staffing of the routine jobs, on which it is undesirable that officials should be employed for protracted periods.

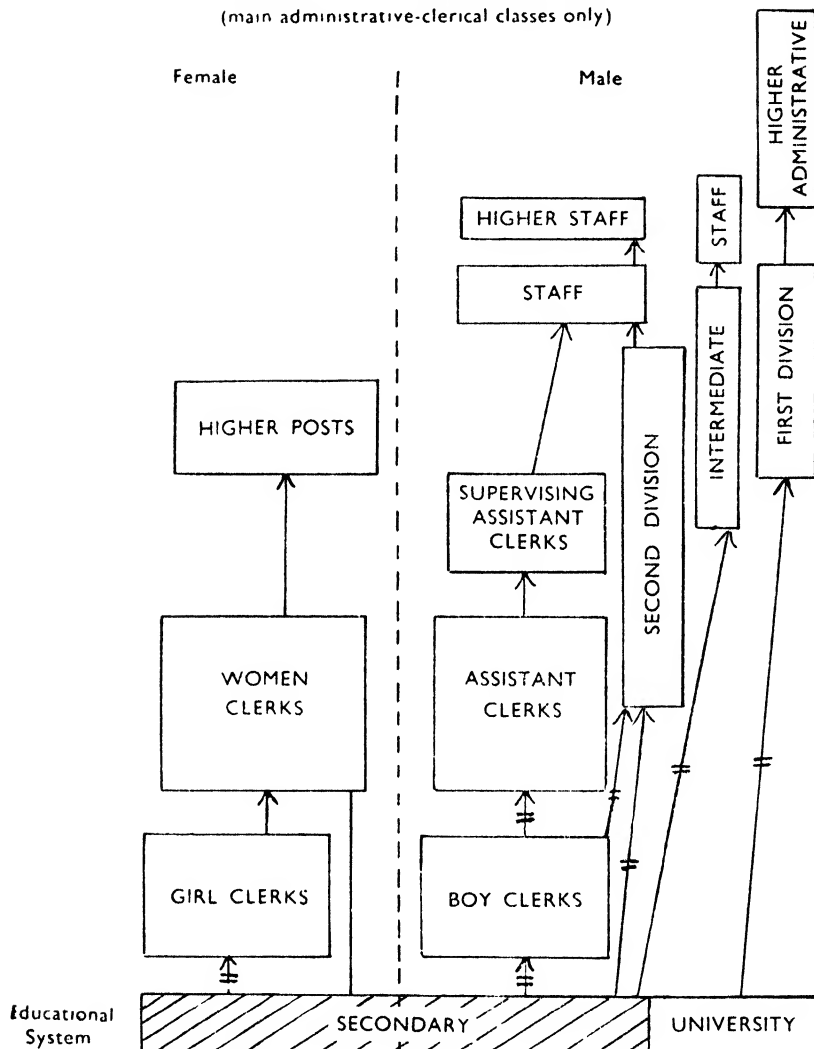
\* \* \* \*

Having now discussed briefly the history of Civil Service in general and the organisation of the British Civil Service in particular, it is time to consider the various Civil Service problems of Recruitment, Training, Promotion, Staff Co-operation and Control, which will therefore be dealt with in the following chapters. Before proceeding, however, the reader is advised to glance at Diagrams I and II (pages 62 and 63) which show the British Civil Service organisation as it was in 1914 and at the outbreak of the present war.

(1) A Royal Commission has been set up by the Government to consider the whole problem of Equal Pay.

(2) During the present war it has become the practice for the departments to retain the woman civil servant after marriage in a temporary capacity.

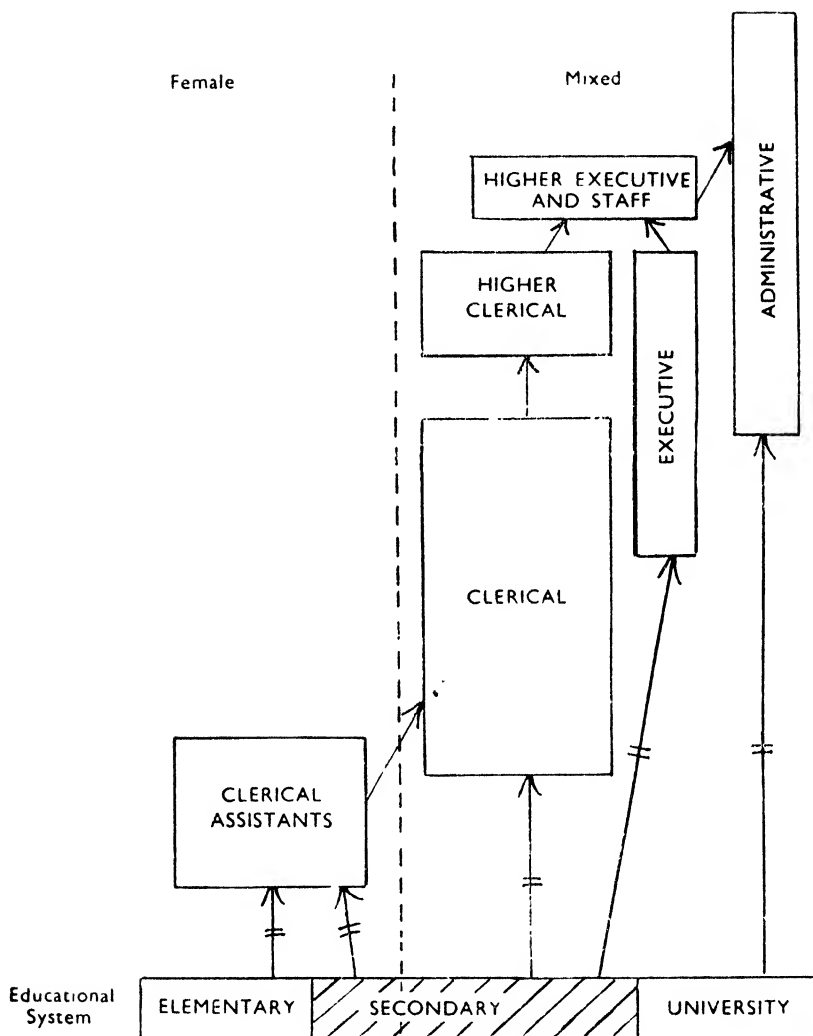
DIAGRAM No 1  
THE BRITISH CIVIL SERVICE IN 1914  
(main administrative-clerical classes only)



*N.B.*—The sexes fall within separate hierarchies. Normal avenues of progress are shown by the arrows (other avenues certainly existed but there was little plan in such promotion arrangements). The crossed arrows show entrance and advancement avenues by examination only.

Generally the importance of the grades increases from left to right and from bottom to top of the diagram. The rectangles do not represent the relative sizes of the groups.

DIAGRAM No II  
THE BRITISH CIVIL SERVICE 1921-1939



*N.B.*—Except for the basic class of Clerical Assistants (originally known as Writing Assistants) the sexes are no longer segregated. Normal avenues of progress are shown by the arrows. The crossed arrows show entrance avenues which are by open competition only.

Generally the importance of the grades increases from left to right and from bottom to top of the diagram. The rectangles do not represent the relative sizes of the groups.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RECRUITMENT

CLEARLY, CIVIL SERVICE history can be epitomised as the story of the recruitment of officials, since on this first essential step largely rests the nature and degree of usefulness of the administrative machinery to the service of which the human elements are dedicated. While the form of the Civil Service depends upon the complexity of social and economic factors that contributes to the moulding of the community, it is equally true that the method of recruitment and the type of recruit to the public services will be determined by the immediate nature and aims of the State.

In view, therefore, of the vicissitudes in the development of governmental forms, as illustrated by the cavalcade of historic change, it was not to be expected that the various types of recruitment would show a coherent growth from the simple stage of irresponsible appointment by the despotic ruler to a system of carefully guarded and impersonal recruitment by a legally appointed agent on behalf of the entire community. Officers have been chosen in a multitude of ways: some kings have conferred responsibilities of office, together with their richest fruits, upon worthless court favourites, while others have striven to select those most capable of employing the arts of administration; offices have been sold to fill the public exchequer and have become the hereditary possessions of their purchasers; others have been auctioned to the highest bidder to avoid the difficulties of central organisation. In democratic communities the official posts have been filled by public election or allocated by lot.

From such a variety of experience it is difficult to deduce general rules. It is apparent, however, that appointments may either be made arbitrarily or under a regulated procedure: that is to say, the appointing agency may either be in 'complete control and choose its own standards of selection or be responsible to the community under a carefully regulated procedure.

With the problem of responsibility marches the question of aim. The danger is that uncontrolled appointment will lead to



its manipulation in the interest of a narrow group within the community and the probability is that, even where less restricted horizons are sought, as under the spoils system, the power of appointment will be used as the currency of vested interests. So long as this power is in the hands of individuals with a vivid appreciation of the needs of the State the problem of control does not become acute, but with the growth of the community and the expansion of the public service the diffusion of responsibility creates a demand for closer scrutiny of the methods in use. Ultimately the test will be that of administrative efficiency, and the failure of personal standards, inevitably affected by the evils of favouritism, will recoil upon the community, which is called upon to bear the cost. In the long run, it will be discovered that the power of appointment is too potent a weapon to leave within the unregulated discretion of the executive, and the principle of neutrality will be invoked. There will be a need for an appointing agency, which will be able to tackle the problem from a technical point of view, uninfluenced by the importunities of seekers after privilege, and whose daily acts and general procedure are both subject to law and open to public criticism. It would not be true to suggest that methods of appointment have progressed historically from the most arbitrary to the most highly controlled; yet, in so far as the advent of the social state has transformed the act of appointment into a highly technical process and created a demand for impersonal selection of the State's servants, it can be maintained that the choice of officials by competitive methods, through the agency of a commission whose neutrality is legally protected, represents an advance upon any previous system.

The difference, in this context, between the democratic and the social state is worth stressing. Britain and the United States are both democratic States, yet one has a highly developed Civil Service and the other has not.<sup>(1)</sup> Germany, on the other hand, an essentially non-democratic State, has a highly developed Civil Service, the common link between Britain and Germany being their advanced stage of social organisation.

#### QUEST FOR IMPARTIALITY

<sup>1</sup> Patronage methods in Britain were certainly subjected to devastating criticism on equalitarian grounds, but ultimately it

<sup>(1)</sup> Since the inception of the New Deal in 1933 this contrast has been considerably weakened.

was the need for increased administrative competence that turned the scale and decreed that objective methods of selection should be employed. And once such methods are adopted, the insistent demands of the staff, that all opportunities for favouritism shall be eliminated, act as powerful influences in the same direction. ,

In America, however, the working of the constitution which depended so largely on the party system, took precedence over the nation's social needs, which, in a community of unbounded potential riches, could be left for some considerable time to the chaotic mercies of unregulated private enterprise. The party victorious at the elections had an easy method of rewarding its chief supporters: it could distribute among them the 'spoils' of office by displacing all those present holders whose active support had been withheld or given to their opponents. Thus a strong vested interest existed in the Federal and State services and every election became a struggle for official preferment. The existence of the party loomed with greater importance than the efficiency of the administration and the constitutional complexity of a wide geographical federation rendered alternative solutions exceedingly difficult.

Nor was it hard to discover in the democratic schools theoretical support for this system. Jefferson was the first President to introduce, in 1803, the idea of changing officials with the advent of a new party to power; but he chose men of undoubted fitness and only made such changes as he deemed administratively necessary. It was President Jackson (1828) who introduced the 'spoils' system in earnest and allowed only his own staunch supporters to fill the governmental posts. He supported his policy by the democratic, if fallacious, argument that all men were equally fit to hold office and that permanent tenure under the Federation was out of tune with the nature of the State.

In a similar administrative environment such an argument might be given some appearance of reasonableness so long as the individuals rewarded were endowed with a minimum of common sense, but to-day conditions have changed. There is a complicated technique to be learned. Thus the modern appointing agency in a democratic state has not only to aim at the greatest possible objectivity in its entrance tests but also to obtain a requisite supply of talent for the fulfilment of the heaviest tasks of administration. /

With the setting up of an independent appointing agency a

great step forward is made, but the nature of the selective processes to be introduced has still to be determined. The tests imposed by the appointing commission may be competitive or non-competitive, restricted to certain categories or open to all persons irrespective of their social experience (subject, of course, to certain general considerations in regard to age, etc.). The technical nature of the posts to be filled, the peculiarities of the general organisation of the service will strongly influence the commission's decisions. For instance, in America (where a Federal Civil Service Commission has been in existence since 1883), the policy of treating each post on its intrinsic merits and of attempting to recruit persons with just the requisite abilities has greatly complicated the appointing authority's tasks and made it necessary to delegate many of its functions to the departments. The efficiency of the controlling authority depends largely upon the integration of the service into grades and classes, the generalising of the demand for the different administrative aptitudes.

For certain technical posts it will be necessary to lay down minimum standards (the holding of certain academic qualifications, for example) and where supply is not likely to equal demand, a qualifying test may be sufficient; but in the main a competitive test will be called for and it will be desirable that this test shall be as 'open' as possible.

#### ESSENCE OF OPEN COMPETITION

The introduction of the principle of open competition for the recruitment of officials was an important event in the history of political development. Yet it is a principle that is not always clearly understood. It is widely held—and the view receives constant endorsement from well-known authorities on administrative matters—that open competition sets out to ensure the selection of the best available individuals for the public service; and consequently that its inadequacy can be proved if, in comparison with other methods, it appears to fall short of this objective. The truth is that open competition was introduced, both in Britain and in America, in order to eliminate the personal factor in the choice of civil servants, and this was held to be so important an objective that any inefficiency arising from the attempt to generalise the process of selection could be borne with equanimity.

The idea that open competition ensures equality of oppor-

tunity is important in a democratic age. Yet to set an examination at all means the imposition of a standard, and wisdom declares that any such standard should ensure the appointment of persons suitable for the positions they are to be called upon to fill. It is usual to fix age limits for the examination, and this naturally gives an advantage to those whose education at the age fixed has at least reached a stage of equivalence with the examination standard. Thus open competition in practice means equality of opportunity to all of a certain age; it postulates, it is true, a certain standard of education, but its 'openness' is preserved by the absence of any rule giving preference to or excluding any general class of applicant from entry. One of its great virtues is that it does not leave the unsuccessful candidate with a feeling that he has been victimised: on the contrary, he will feel that his lack of success is attributable to his own faults.

Improvement of the efficiency of the open competitive method in obtaining the right sort of recruit must depend upon a continual readjustment of the procedure in face of experience and experiment. The selecting board will need to keep in touch both with the changing administrative environment and with the developing educational system. This readjustment the Civil Service Commission in Britain takes special steps to ensure.

Ultimately, therefore, open competition, since its net has to be spread as widely as possible, is in the nature of a compromise. It selects objectively a sample composed of persons likely in the balance to give the type of service that is required. It cannot recruit only the best, nor would it be a point in its favour if it did so: the community has important work to perform outside the governmental sphere. But if it does not limit its choice to the best it is essential that among those chosen should be included a fair percentage of the best, for the State has need of all the talents.

This, then, is the real objective confronting the appointing agency when it decides upon its examination standards. It is concerned with an equation; of devising a method of extracting from the whole field of potential recruitment those whose subsequent career in the State service will produce as high a return to the community as the remaining elements will produce elsewhere; for a system that denuded the non-governmental sphere of an adequate share of the best would be a dangerous one.

It would indeed be very undesirable from the point of view of the subsequent efficiency of the individual if open competition

were efficacious in selecting only the best. Not only does the Civil Service require a supply of all the talents, but it also needs a number of moderate entrants to accomplish the less ambitious tasks. As Sir Stanley Leathes, formerly Civil Service Commissioner, has pointed out, a drawback of the competitive method of entry is that it forms an easy avenue as compared with the more arduous courses of studies required for other professions, and there is consequently a danger that too many talented individuals may be obtained. It is perhaps a good thing, then, that many, who are quite able in their approach to scholastic matters, do not prove themselves to be much above the average when they come to deal with practical problems. Such a requirement is not, of course, applicable to a directing class, such as the administrative class, where only those capable of first-rate administrative leadership are required, and because treatises on Civil Service invariably pay almost exclusive attention to this directing class, the need for average talents in the larger groups has been given little discussion.

The British Civil Service Commission has developed the open competitive examination to a high degree of efficiency, but it would be wrong to imagine that this type of examination was

TABLE 1

*Types of Recruitment to the British Civil Service under the control of the Civil Service Commission*  
1934—1938

		1934	1935	1936	1937	1938
OPEN COMPETITION	Written only ...	3,725	5,826	9,695	10,112	12,923
	Composite ...	361	522	519	481	670
	Interview only	130	191	182	290	272
LIMITED COMPETITION	Written only ...	961	1,250	1,618	1,538	1,327
	Composite ...	40	91	138	93	101
	Interview only	54	103	148	105	151
NOMINATION	From Established Service ...	423	329	298	406	512
	From outside Established Service ...	8,455	8,328	13,377	18,295	17,875
Annual totals ...		14,149	16,640	25,975	31,320	33,831

(Quoted from Civil Service Commissioners' Annual Reports.)

N.B.—'Composite' examinations are partly written and partly by interview.

adopted in or even suitable for all recruitments carried out under the Commission's supervision. There are a number of posts for which technical qualifications or experience are necessary, and in such cases the pure theory of open competition is not applicable. Indeed, a glance at the table on page 69 summarising appointments during the period 1934-38 will show that the ordinary examination method covers only a part of the field. There are in the main three methods in operation, viz. open competition, limited competition, and nomination. Nomination almost indicates a possibility of patronage, but under this heading are included a number of appointments of officers already in the Service which are really a type of promotion, and in many other cases an appropriate test had already been set in the particular department before the candidate was nominated: in all cases the Commission's procedure is carefully regulated.

#### EX-SERVICEMEN PROBLEM, 1919 AND AFTER

Actually, open competition is applied to all entrants from outside the Service to the classes in the administrative-clerical field, but this does not, unfortunately, mean that all present holders of such posts have entered the Service by this avenue alone. After the First World War large numbers of ex-Service men were given permanent clerical posts following a period of temporary service.<sup>(1)</sup> In the first place they entered by nomination, and favouritism could creep in at that stage—whether it did or not depended entirely upon the methods of selection adopted by the particular department. Often the individual's apparent inability to do any other job, rather than his potential ability to perform clerical work, was the deciding factor. Appointments were in the first place of a temporary nature, but pressure began to bear upon Parliament for the transfer of these special entrants to permanent positions. For the first time for many decades a phenomenon appeared in relation to the British Civil Service, which had always been so prevalent elsewhere. Political pressure was exerted to obtain appointments, not, it is true, for particular individuals, but for members of a class which certainly deserved well of its country.

An examination, of a moderate standard, open only to temporary officials and known as the Lytton Competition, was

<sup>(1)</sup> Best summary of this problem is contained in Treasury's *Introductory Memoranda* (1930).

held in November, 1920, as a result of which 2,000 were immediately declared successful and appointed to the clerical class, while all others who had qualified were placed upon a waiting list. A second examination was arranged in June, 1921, and under continuing pressure from the vested interests, a further examination (known as the Southborough) was held in July, 1925, as a result of which over 8,000 candidates were successful in obtaining appointments. Finally, a new class of non-pensionable permanent officers was introduced in the same year and many thousands more ex-Service men were absorbed. Many of these permanent officers were subsequently promoted to the pensionable classes.

If, it may be asked, these persons were so much below the normal standards of proficiency, why were so many absorbed without strong protests from the existing personnel of the Service? The answer is manifold. Not only were there strong interests outside the Service supporting the temporary men's case, a widespread sympathy for the ex-Serviceman in general, but there were also favourable influences within the Service itself. The staff, through their associations, were concerned at the danger that the newcomers might undermine their own conditions and they therefore lent strong support to every movement that offered the fullest status to these recruits: the administrator, who had to report upon each case individually, was inclined to allow his sympathies for those who had suffered in the war to overshadow his assessment of their administrative suitability. Sentiment often outvoted common sense and subsequent developments not rarely indicated that grave mistakes in choice had been made. But the greatest asset to the ex-Service party was the lack of a planned policy on the part of the administration. The situation was allowed to drift. Development of recruitment policy was moulded by events in a haphazard way. If it had been clearly seen at the outset that large numbers of the men recruited for temporary posts in the clerical field would eventually, and at no distant date, be granted permanent posts, a more rigorous preliminary test would no doubt have been imposed. In two ways justice could have been amply done to the ex-Service elements without undue burden upon the general efficiency: (1) steps could have been taken to ensure that only those most fitted for clerical work among the vast number of ex-Servicemen should be given an opportunity to qualify; (2) ex-Servicemen, inside the Service, but not of

the clerical classes, could have been given wider opportunities to qualify for clerical posts and their vacant posts could have been allocated in turn to less qualified ex-Servicemen from outside.<sup>(1)</sup>

The question of ex-Service recruitment has been considered at length because it has an important bearing upon the general standards of the Civil Service to-day. Open competitive examinations were not re-introduced till 1925<sup>(2)</sup> and the full effects of the new recruitment system were not assessable even at the outbreak of the Second World War, an event which makes further prophecy impossible.

### EXAMINATION METHODS

The examinations set for the general classes in the administrative-clerical sphere consist<sup>(3)</sup> chiefly of written papers in academic subjects, carefully planned—as we have already pointed out—to attract candidates of a certain educational type; and in this they are extremely successful. It may well be asked why an attempt should not be made to set specialised tests in order to obtain just the right people for the job. In some cases where special technical qualifications are necessary, this is done. For example, in the examination for appointments as Assistant Superintendent of Traffic (limited to certain officers of the Post Office), the subjects include higher mathematics, electricity, telephony, mechanics, electrotechnology and telegraphy. The examination for officerships of Customs and Excise is given a distinct scientific bias; while that for Assistant Inspectorships of Taxes has been framed to provide for people who take the Bachelor of Commerce course, such subjects as business organisation, accounting, economics, and banking and exchange being included.

It is not easy to determine, however, just what sort of technique is required for the satisfactory performance of administrative and clerical functions. Before the First World War such subjects as bookkeeping and shorthand, *précis*, reading manuscript and digesting returns were included in the junior clerical examinations and it is perhaps a little to be regretted that, with the exception of *précis* (which is capable of a literary interpretation), they have been eliminated, though it must be admitted that such elimination

(1) The Government's White Paper (Cmd. 6567) foreshadows how past mistakes are to be avoided after the present conflict.

(2) i.e. for Administrative class. Competitions for the Clerical and Executive classes were first held in 1927 and 1928 respectively.

(3) Recruitment by examination has been suspended during the Second World War.



is clearly in line with general policy. One thing is certain in this context, the requirements of an administrative career are so varied and ever-changing that a wide cultural education serves as the most suitable background, whatever further abilities may need subsequently to be developed. We shall deal with the problem of this subsequent development in our next chapter.

Some administrations have indeed attempted to determine in advance more or less precisely what qualifications were required for the particular posts to be filled. Under the American system, already referred to, it has been the practice to issue a schedule covering a restricted range of similar posts and laying down precisely what the duties were and what tests should be imposed. This has led to the growth of cramming schools of all kinds and an undesirable degree of commercialisation of the recruitment procedure. A further disadvantage of requiring a special technique as a condition of official appointment is that it tends both to encourage the growth of an interest specially concerned in obtaining Government posts and to unfit for other work those who participate unsuccessfully in the examinations.

Examinations of an academic cultural nature have not gone uncriticised, especially from the point of view of their alleged unpractical nature, and other types of test have been tried out, particularly in America. Psychological tests designed to examine the natural wit and abilities of the candidate, as distinct from his book-knowledge, have been invented, and it is claimed that such have reached a high degree of effectiveness. Although further developments in this direction are to be expected as a result of the present war, it is to be doubted whether such tests, however efficient, will be suitable for use at the recruitment stage of the public service, especially for the filling of administrative-clerical posts for which the educational standards of the candidate must continue to be of first importance.

### RECENT EXPERIENCE

The proof of the British system can be safely left to the judgment of the results so far achieved. The administrative examination has been consistent in recruiting university students with first-class honours degrees, as a reference to Table 2 on page 74 will show. Oxford and Cambridge have practically monopolised the success lists, largely as a result, no doubt, of their prestige in attracting from the very outset those scholars who have deter-

mined to aim at an official career. Converting the totals in the table for the five years to percentages, the result is as follows: Cambridge 49 per cent.; Oxford 36 per cent.; London 8 per cent.; the rest 7 per cent.

The classical subjects have always figured largely in the results, but after the First World War there was a distinct drift in favour of history, science, and humanistic studies, which, however, despite their importance to the art and science of administration, have never occupied a prominent position in the results. The regula-

TABLE 2  
*Educational Origin and Degree Class of Successful Candidates to the Administrative Class  
of the Home Civil Service  
1934—1938*

<i>Examination</i>	<i>Class</i>	<i>1934</i>	<i>1935</i>	<i>1936</i>	<i>1937</i>	<i>1938</i>	<i>University totals for 5 years</i>
Aberdeen, M.A. ...	1st	—	—	—	1	—	1
Birmingham, B.A. ...	1st	—	$\frac{1}{2}$	—	—	—	$\frac{1}{2}$
Bristol, B.A. ...	1st	—	—	1	—	—	1
Cambridge tripos	1st in						
	both parts	8	14 $\frac{1}{2}$	21 $\frac{1}{2}$	15 $\frac{1}{2}$	16	
„ „	1st in						
	one part	10	6	4	5	8	
„ „	2nd in						
	both parts	—	3	1	4	3	
						—	119 $\frac{1}{2}$
Edinburgh, M.A. ...	1st	1	$\frac{1}{2}$	2	—	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	
„ M.A. ...	2nd	—	—	—	$\frac{1}{2}$	—	6 $\frac{1}{2}$
Glasgow, M.A. ...	1st	1	1	2	1	—	5
London, M.A. ...	—	—	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	—	—	—	
„ B.A. ...	1st	—	1	1	2	—	
„ B.A. ...	2nd	—	—	—	2	2	
„ B.Sc.(Econ.)...	1st	—	1	2	1	—	
„ B.Sc.(Econ.)...	2nd	—	1	—	—	1	
„ LL.B. ...	2nd	—	—	—	—	1	
„ LL.B. ...	pass	—	—	1	—	—	18 $\frac{1}{2}$
Oxford finals ...	1st	10	8	13 $\frac{1}{2}$	13	10 $\frac{1}{2}$	
„ „ ...	2nd	6	5	4	9	9	88
St. Andrews, M.A. ...	1st	—	1	—	—	—	1
Wales, B.A. ...	1st	—	1	—	—	—	1
Dublin, Trinity College, Moderatorship	1st	—	—	1	—	—	1
Annual totals	...	36	46	54	54	53	243

*N.B.*— $\frac{1}{2}$  indicates that some candidates are shared by two Universities.

(Compiled from information in Annual Reports of Civil Service Commissioners, which also show the high percentage of other distinctions, e.g. wranglerships, double successes, special prizes, exhibitions and scholarships, won by the successful candidates.)

tions have been modified to throw the weight more in their direction, but so long as the more purely academic subjects remain the essential curriculum of the educational system, it is not to be anticipated that any considerable change will take place. After all, it is the average quality of the recruit that matters and the consensus of opinion is that this has been consistently high. If, partly owing to his literary background, the British administrative officer has often been found to lack the realist's touch, this is a danger inherent to all services recruited from persons of school age and it may be remedied less by changing the examination than by altering the officer's subsequent experience and conditions.<sup>(1)</sup>

The other examinations in the administrative-clerical sphere appear to have been effective in obtaining the right type of recruit. Both the executive and the clerical class examinations obtain young persons with a secondary school background; the former, naturally, having the more extensive academic experience. Scholars from the same schools figure in both lists and the desirability of having two distinct careers in the middle ranges of the Service has been seriously challenged.

As we have already pointed out, the clerical assistants' examination has, owing to the attractiveness of the posts to the wide competitive field of young women leaving school, been successful in recruiting a somewhat higher grade of officer than was originally intended for the purely routine work of the class. The secondary schools have predominated the success lists.

Although the competitive examinations are usually carried out by means of written papers, the practice of adding an interview test has been extended since the First World War. It is designed to assess the candidate's personality and there is usually a fixed maximum number of marks sufficiently large to influence materially the results of the examination. For example, in the administrative class competition, 300 marks out of a total of 1,300 are assigned to the viva voce test. The aim of this interview is to test personality but it does not constitute a qualifying stage and consequently a low mark for the viva voce does not necessarily eliminate a candidate who does very well in his remaining subjects. Only in the case of the administrative posts in the Foreign Office and Diplomatic Service is a preliminary weeding

(1) Nevertheless, the writer's personal view is that the natural and social sciences must be given more weight in the schools.

out interview instituted and until the First World War the candidate had also to be in receipt of a private income of at least £400 a year. It is considered of paramount importance that officers belonging to this Service should be both personally and socially acceptable and the principle of open competition is therefore considerably modified in this case. Developments during the present upheaval are certain to lead to drastic changes.

The recently published White Paper (Cmd. 6420) on 'Proposals for the Reform of the Foreign Service', 1943, makes far-reaching proposals on the reorganisation of the Foreign Service, which in future is to combine with the Diplomatic and Consular Services to form one comprehensive organisation. Complete separation from the Home Civil Service is visualised. Posts at home and abroad are to be interchangeable and service in the field is to be the rule. Recruitment is to be made chiefly on the basis of open competition through a non-specialised examination of the present administrative standards. A percentage of the appointments is to be made by a selection panel. All candidates are then to undergo a term of specialised training, in which economics, history, and foreign languages are to predominate, followed by a qualifying examination. The subordinate ranks are to form part of the new Foreign Service, which is not the case to-day.

The extension of the interview system has been pressed by many highly placed officials, but the rank and file are strongly critical of any procedure that re-introduces, however incompletely, the personal factor into the recruitment procedure. In this they are justified. Not only do those candidates, whose positions in the success list are affected by the interview marking, rankle under a suspicion of unjust treatment—a suspicion that need not be founded on any valid evidence to be undesirable—but there is small evidence that the interview procedure is capable of achieving the objective it has in view. It is not easy to divine the administrative ability even of the highly educated product of the university, and for those higher positions where the degree of selection needs to be keener and where, consequently, the generalising advantages of open competition are less efficacious, it would certainly be preferable to eliminate the misfits after the examination by means of an efficient probationary period on the actual work of the grade.

It would be easily possible for the interview system to re-introduce the evil practice of favouritism but, fortunately, the

carefully regulated procedure of the Civil Service Commission has reduced this danger to a minimum. The interviews carried out by the Commission are conducted in accordance with a carefully thought out procedure, introduced by Sir Stanley Leathes during his tenure of the office of Chief Commissioner. The aim of the board of interview is to examine the candidate's personality and character. To achieve this aim effectively, it is essential that he should be put at his ease as quickly as possible. No searching inquiries or 'catch' questions are offered. The one objective is to make him talk, and general questions on subjects such as sports, hobbies and literary interests are made with this end in view. In practice, the methods adopted have been found eminently satisfactory, but it is doubtful whether the conditions of a short interview can have permitted a really high degree of objective accuracy to be attained.

Before concluding this chapter it should be mentioned that another important advantage possible under a centrally controlled recruitment system is the advertisement of all vacancies so that the largest possible recruitment area may be tapped. It is essential in a democracy, not only that every eligible citizen should be permitted to compete for public positions irrespective of his social origins, but also that he should be given the knowledge adequate to enable him to come to an early decision as to his personal participation.

In Britain the degree of centralisation and the method of advertisement leave little to be desired, but in the other two democracies, viz. U.S.A. and France<sup>(1)</sup>, the ideal combination is still to seek. In America, for example, despite the high efficiency of the Federal Civil Service Commission, the legal provision that Government posts should be allocated proportionally to the populations of the different States, modifies considerably the principle of equality of opportunity. While in France, where the *concours*, or examination, is carried out with great care and adequate publicity, the lack of a central control leads to a multiplicity of examinations and consequently to a restriction of the field from which candidates are likely to be forthcoming.

This brings to a close our rapid survey of the important problem of recruitment and in the following chapter it is intended to examine the next essential step in public personnel organisation—the question of training.

(1) This refers to 'before the present war'.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### TRAINING

RECRUITMENT OF the Civil Service is as much a political as an administrative problem, for, as we have seen, although the administrative authorities may determine the ideal characteristics of the recruit and formulate the appropriate procedure of selection, the standards and methods actually employed will, in the last resort, be strongly influenced by considerations beyond their control. It is not until the new official stands upon the threshold of his career, and the question of his introduction to his new duties is faced, that the problem of Civil Service efficiency becomes predominantly within the control of the administrator. Training may be considered the keynote of staff efficiency, and if it be discovered that less attention has been paid to its development than the conditions appear to warrant, the responsibility will have to rest upon the shoulders of the administrators rather than of the politicians.

At the outset it may be recognised that the kind of training adopted will be largely determined by the general method of recruitment. If specific attainments have been demanded or a definite course of probationary training has been prescribed, it is clear that the scope for subsequent training will be limited and will be confined chiefly to the inculcation of the methods and procedure of the office to which the recruit is appointed and to the gradual development of his specialised knowledge as he advances in his career. For the technical or professional recruit this method is strictly appropriate, but in the case of the administrative-clerical entrant, it is inadequate. Not only is it impossible to lay down the technical requirements of a range of duties for which no definite body of expert knowledge can be said to exist, but it is undesirable to recruit persons specially trained in the intricacies of a limited type of Government work. It is a sound rule that the State should not seek recruits with a type of training for which there is no demand in non-official spheres. The training of a large number of persons, many of whom will not ordinarily

be required by the public service, in subjects that will be of little or no use elsewhere, is not only a wasteful procedure but encourages the formation of an interest group whose importunities the Government may not always be strong to counter. In this connection it is interesting to note that in Prussia—where a comprehensive system of pre-entry training has been in existence for some time—there has been a tendency to lower the standards in order to permit the entry of less successful candidates.

In any case the insistence upon such training must restrict the field of recruitment, since many otherwise suitable candidates will, for one reason or another, have been unable to undergo the necessary training course. If there were a recognised body of useful, perhaps even necessary, administrative knowledge, these considerations would not apply with such force and the Government might be in as good a position to recruit a fully-fledged administrator as it is to-day to recruit a competent typist. This parallel must not be laboured, for, although it would be unreasonable for the Government to train its typists after recruitment when the labour market is already in a position adequately to meet its needs in this direction, it is never likely to be in a position to obtain so easily a supply of administrators, since tuition in administrative matters cannot be isolated from the moulding influences of actual experience. It is clear that the exclusion of other than academic subjects from and the sample-selecting characteristics of open competition combine to eliminate any possibility of previous training. An examination of this type sets out to choose persons of a standard deemed suitable for development on the work to be performed. It selects candidates of promise: the matter of subsequent fulfilment has still to receive attention. It is incontrovertible that the normal methods of open competition, more perhaps than any other form of recruitment, presuppose a complete system of post-entry training. Yet this is not borne out in practice: until quite recently little thought had been given to training in the British Civil Service, the service in which the development of open competition has reached its highest stage.

There have existed, it is true, many excellent schemes, but these have generally arisen under the urgent demand for the inculcation of a specialised technique. The usual practice, especially in the ordinary clerical branches, has been to pitchfork the newcomer straight on to a job with the minimum amount of pre-

liminary advice, and to leave him to the mercies of his, often, over-pressed colleagues. There is much to be said for learning by experience but this haphazard method has pushed the practical principle to extremes.

Before considering the various methods of training in use, attention should be drawn to the contribution to training in the Service made by the Reorganisation Committee (1920) previously mentioned. It was intended that the lowest grades of the administrative and executive classes should constitute training grades. Only in relation to the administrative hierarchy, however, has this intention been effectively carried out. The assistant principals constitute a cadet grade. The recruit is expected to enter upon his duties with the idea of acquiring, as rapidly as possible, the knowledge and experience requisite for the fulfilment of the tasks normally assigned to the principal grade. He is essentially an understudy and every opportunity is given him to broaden his mind and heighten his understanding of the official environment in which he is destined to move. The number of assistant principal posts is kept low in order that promotion to the grade above may come within a few years to all who are fitted for the administrative career.

In the introduction of the so-called training grade of the executive class, two mistakes were made if the original design was to be fulfilled: the salary scale was too long and numbers were too high in proportion to the higher grades of the class. Only in a select number of offices has the organisation permitted the training grade idea to work.

### TRAINING METHODS

In reviewing the various training methods in more or less general use, one may usefully divide them into four main types, viz.:

- (1) Training by Experience.
- (2) Formal Training.
- (3) Training by Encouragement.
- (4) Training by the Dissemination of General Information.

Naturally these categories are by no means exclusive and the complete training scheme will make use of all four methods.

(1) *Training by Experience.* The common practice of uncere-  
moniously casting the new entrant on to a job has already been  
referred to. Under the simplest training scheme, however, it is



usual to give some thought to this process and at the least to choose those jobs which will give the new entrant the most suitable introduction to his new sphere. In order to widen his experience as quickly as possible, it is the practice to transfer him from one branch to another at reasonable intervals. In all the large departments some such scheme has long been in operation even where no definite plans for training have existed.

Visits to other branches and organisations performing similar functions are important in this connection and in some offices regular tours of inspection are arranged. In view of the tendency to narrowness of outlook to be expected from officials who, since leaving school, have had a comparatively restricted experience of active affairs, this method might be considerably developed, especially in relation to the administrative class. With this end in view, a sort of grand tour on the Continent for higher officials has been proposed and, in any case, it is suggested that a system of exchanges of staff for limited periods between the Government service and the larger semi-official and autonomous corporations might well be developed, something on the lines of the practice adopted even in times of peace by the armed forces (e.g. between the Home and Dominion Services).

In order to widen the experience of junior administrative officers, the Ministry of Health follows the wise procedure of placing assistant principals and principals in charge of public inquiries, especially into proposals by local authorities. During these hearings the officials may be confronted by leading members of the Parliamentary Bar, and the various contacts that they make with these and other distinguished people afford an excellent training experience for the higher posts which they will eventually be called upon to fill. †

(2) *Formal Training.* This type of training may be said to include planned instruction of all descriptions, from the informal lecture to the comprehensive course arranged by the department and carried out either internally or with the aid of outside agencies. In a few instances it has been found desirable to set up specially equipped schools, but this method is not generally useful in the administrative-clerical sphere. The great success, for example, of the school introduced by the General Post Office for the training of counter clerks in the post offices is largely due to the possibility of illustrating the practical requirements of this particular task by the installation for demonstration purposes at the school of a

fully equipped post office counter. On the other hand, abroad, notably in Germany, administrative academies have been set up for the education of officials, but these deal less with practical technique than with the general theories of administration and political organisation.

Specialised courses in the work of the department are arranged in both the Inland Revenue and the Customs and Excise departments, two ministries in which the intensive study of the complicated body of law by which their work is governed is essential. Some departments, in arranging formal training schemes, find it necessary to avail themselves of outside assistance. An interesting instance of this type is afforded by the Exchequer and Audit department, which requires its executive officers to attend special evening classes at the London School of Economics. The courses deal with specialised branches of accounting which have a particular bearing upon the department's work. Other departments, notably the Ministry of Labour, encourage their staffs to undertake specially arranged lecture courses, but in general this practice has not been widely developed. There is still a feeling abroad, though it is rapidly weakening, that there is likely to be more loss than gain in any movement to improve the quality of the subordinate grades. In a world crying out for an increase of competence the mere suspicion that such a feeling can exist is little less than tragic.

(3) *Training by Encouragement*, by which title we have designated our third category, may be stated generally to be conspicuous by its absence in the British Civil Service. Apart from the exceptional cases just referred to, where specially planned courses having a particular bearing upon the department's functions are actively recognised, the attitude of the Service to those juniors who pursue their own education is one of neutrality, often restrained rather than benevolent. Some departments, including the Post Office and the Ministry of Labour, do actually advertise educational successes in the official circular, but there is, at present, no general encouragement or recognition of such efforts. This attitude is not difficult to explain. Not only does the eminently British 'practical outlook' and dislike of theory permeate the Civil Service, but the Service's promotional system cannot, as we shall see in the following chapter, permit of much flexibility in this direction. Two movements indicate a change in this attitude: the growing interest of the educational authorities in administrative

subjects and the efficient Further Education movement inaugurated with much success by the civil servants themselves.

(4) The fourth training method, viz. by the *Dissemination of General Information*, is intended to cover all those means by which an organisation informs its staff, by circular, booklet or otherwise. This is essentially the method in general use in the Civil Service to-day.

Each department issues its own instructions to the staff, sometimes in the form of personal circulars to each officer for retention, sometimes in the form of rule books for general reference. Such instructions may relate either to the personal obligations and privileges of the staff or to the appropriate procedure for the carrying out of the department's functions. All offices have regulations of this sort and, indeed, they are essential to the day-to-day execution of their work. Such documents, however, are necessarily precise and legalistic in tone; they are not designed to make fascinating reading, and although important contributions to the training of all officials, there is a need for something more informal for the use of new entrants. Some departments have provided informative booklets for the use of the staff, but in most cases this is not done. In certain offices there are small libraries, containing books of special interest to which members of the staff are allowed access; almost all circulate periodicals and other documents of technical importance to the different sections.

There is still room for experiment in the direction of training. The existence of a number of interesting schemes in different departments should not blind us to the truth that training is still carried out in a desultory fashion. More thought needs to be given to the whole subject.

### THREE TYPES OF OFFICIAL TRAINING

While it is essential from the practical point of view that training should be approached from the aspect of method, the theoretical presuppositions of training must be related to the question of aim. In relation to the Civil Service there are broadly three distinct types of training from this standpoint. In the first place the official needs to be introduced to the general methods of his occupation, the essentials of clerkship: this may be briefly summarised as *Training in Basic Clerical Techniques*. In the second place the official needs to be educated in routine and specialised technique of his own department: this may be called *Departmental*

*Training.* In the third place those who are to fill the leading positions in the official hierarchy must acquire not only the practice of the art but also a knowledge of the theory of *Public Administration*.

Basic clerical training is something of a novel conception in relation to the Government service. It is a generally held opinion that the mere abilities to read and to write entitle anyone to aspire to occupy an office stool, a notion which the schools, ever anxious to find pseudo-respectable posts for their less brilliant pupils, do everything in their power to encourage. Under the influence of this idea we are in grave danger of becoming a nation of clerks, the majority of whom have but a rudimentary knowledge of the technique of their occupation. Examination entrants, especially to-day, since the elimination of certain useful subjects—such as bookkeeping and shorthand—from the entrance test, are apt to lack the practical touch. The elements of office organisation are ‘picked up’ somewhat fortuitously and there is a wide variety of inefficient practice. What is clearly needed is a carefully planned course in such subjects as office practice and organisation, bookkeeping, elements of statistics, and outlines of central government. This is not a matter for the separate departments but for a central agency. A certificate of reasonable standards could be instituted and the junior officer should be expected to obtain it during his early years of service as a minimum requirement for further advancement. The introduction of this sort of training, which is at present nobody’s business, would without doubt considerably increase the efficiency of the clerical sections of the Civil Service.

Practically all the schemes and experience referred to in earlier paragraphs would fall within the category, Departmental Training. It is not difficult to understand why, where any sort of training has been undertaken, it should be of this type, since it is clear that hitherto the separate departments have been impelled to concentrate only upon the sort of training that has been urgently needed for the efficient performance of their functions. And where there is a specialised technique or a complicated system of law to be understood, this need has made itself felt at a very early stage. The carefully planned training system of the Inland Revenue department has already been mentioned in this context.<sup>(1)</sup> More recently, however, the considerable inflow of un-

<sup>(1)</sup> Described in *Civil Service Staff Relationships* (1943) by E. N. Gladden, p. 128.

trained staff under the urge of departmental expansion has led to an increased interest in training matters in the less specialised departments. The Post Office, for example, which before the war was undergoing an extensive reorganisation, introduced an interesting scheme under which the supervision of training methods was placed in the hands of specially selected officers, whose task included also the arrangement of periodical transfers within the sub-departments for the purpose of widening the trainee's experience.

Public Administration is not a subject to which much attention has hitherto been given in Britain either by the Civil Service or by the educational authorities. Quite apart from the general impression that the administrator is born and not made, an idea which has much historical support but which the increasing demand in the modern world for administrative talent must succeed in superseding if progress is to continue, there is the fundamental British characteristic of preferring practice to theory to account for this neglect. To these trends must be added the strong support of the caste system of organisation which has given the leading civil servants every reason to admire the results of their own intensively classical training and to despise those aspirants from other sources who might be inclined to take a less specialised view of the requirements of administrative leadership.

On the other hand the undoubted success of the system up to the present must not be overlooked in formulating the changes required to meet the new conditions, and in expanding the sphere of theory in the training of the administrator everything possible must be done to obtain the ideal balance in which practice will ever have precedence over theory.

There have been of recent years many indications of a change in attitude. The setting up in 1922 of the Institute of Public Administration under the initiative of the officials themselves, the excellent research and propaganda work since accomplished by this organisation, and the introduction of special degrees and diplomas in Public Administration in the universities, afford sufficient evidence of this change, but more enthusiasm and encouragement are still required from official quarters.

There is not space here to outline the system required to effect the necessary development and it must be sufficient to indicate the need for official recognition of an examination of a professional nature to supplement for the higher official the pre-

liminary basic clerical course already proposed in this chapter. Something on the lines of the examination for the Diploma of Public Administration conferred by London University would be appropriate, although further development of the syllabus would be necessary. In this field training by encouragement would enter strongly; the initiative to study being left to the individual civil servant. But for a successful system two important changes would be essential: first a new attitude by those in control; second a Civil Service which would permit the advancement of the talented more effectively than the present system. These are problems to be investigated in the following chapters.

\* \* \* \*

The foregoing relates to the position in 1939, but to-day there is a stirring which may well lead to revolutionary changes. The proposals of the Select Committee on National Expenditure<sup>(1)</sup> will, if they are adopted, undoubtedly have far-reaching results. In any case the needs of the post-war situation will surely lead to closer attention being paid to the problem of training for administration. The following quotation from Sir William Beveridge's masterly exposition on Social Security<sup>(2)</sup> demonstrates the way the wind is blowing:

'In the organisation of the Ministry (of Social Security) two points will be regarded as of outstanding importance:

- (a) decentralisation and close contact with local agencies of all kinds in dealing with the varied needs of insured persons;
- (b) selection and training of staff with special regard to their functions in serving the public and in understanding the human problems with which they will be concerned.'

Finally, as this book was going to press, the 'Report of the Committee on the Training of Civil Servants'<sup>(3)</sup> was published. Its main findings are summarised in Appendix 4. It is perhaps not out of place to state that the above chapter is a shortened version of a statement on training submitted by the author to the Committee.

<sup>(1)</sup> *Sixteenth Report from the Select Committee on National Expenditure*, Session 1941-42, 120.

<sup>(2)</sup> *Social Insurance and Allied Services*. Cmd. 6404 (1942), paragraph 385.

<sup>(3)</sup> Cmd. 6525.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### PROMOTION

THE PROBLEM of selection from within the Service to fill the higher ranks of the hierarchy, or promotion as it is usually called, is a very difficult one. In the field of private enterprise there is the test of financial worth by which the employee's efficiency may be assessed: this is absent in the public service. If, on the other hand, the private employee is advanced in his career for other than reasons of worth, the selecting officer and not the community will be the first to bear the cost. The public service cannot afford the luxury of nepotism. Even in a public service, however, where 'spoils' methods of recruitment obtain and the doctrine of 'rotation of office' is accepted, there can be no real promotion problem, since this is only born with the beginnings of a career service.

It was to be expected that in a service whose members were chosen by 'open competition', a firm demand would soon arise from among such entrants that a similarly objective method of choice should be adopted for after-entry selections. Strenuous efforts would be made to eliminate any favouritism from the system of promotion. In effect this has been the experience in Britain, but the solution of the problem is not, in any case, easy and the only methods that are truly neutral, seniority selection and examinations, have grave disadvantages both to the staff and to the administration.

#### THE SENIORITY PRINCIPLE

The seniority list is a simple invention, an obvious reply to the demand by the members of any group of employees for a definition of their order of precedence. The principle of 'first come first served' presents a canon of justice, the appeal of which is universal; the idea that time shall be the factor to determine the rightness of things enshrines the very perfection of objectivity. It has in the past been at the bedrock of all human institutions in which an order of precedence has been needed, if only to define how the privileges due to the institution as a whole should be

apportioned among its members. Military, political and social organisations have all found a continuous need for the principle of seniority and, quite apart from its obvious advantages in confirming the leadership of age and experience, it has always appealed to the generality as the only safe reply to any attempt to raise the junior on the score of merit. Those who rankle from a sense of injustice are not competent to decide between the appearance of merit and of favouritism. Moreover, it is understandable that the majority, who can never aspire to the merit choice, should give enthusiastic support to a principle which appears to endow all men with equality.

The staff, then, is always inclined strongly to favour choice for promotion in accordance with the seniority list and it is not unusual to discover that the staff's representatives are concerned to urge the extension of the system in place of other methods in current use. But the employment of a seniority list as the only basis for promotion is grounded upon rather wide assumptions. It assumes that all members of the grade are fit for promotion and that the list is arranged in an order more or less coincident with the ages of the staff, so that all in due turn shall obtain an opportunity to serve in a higher post. Moreover, in order that the service of each officer in the higher posts should last for a reasonable period, it assumes that the percentage of higher posts to lower is high. And lastly, it assumes that vacancies are arising in a reasonable flow, neither being held up for a period by the maladjustment of age groupings due to a too rapid period of expansion in the past, nor being seriously slowed down by the abolition of posts on account of the actual contraction of the work of the class. In practice the occurrence of such ideal conditions is extremely improbable. All members of a grade are not fit for promotion; promotions are usually few and far between, an abnormal rather than a normal process; while changes in personnel are most likely to be subject to irregular fluctuations.

#### THE PROMOTIONAL EXAMINATION

The second objective method, promotion by examination, would on the face of it appear likely to lead to more favourable results. It eliminates all favouritism, places each individual on an equal footing, frustrates any attempt to bring backstairs influences to bear and relieves the supervisory staff of a burdensome responsibility. Unfortunately, except under the most favourable



conditions, it does not guarantee the real aim of an efficient promotion system, viz. to choose the best man. The truth is that the qualities required for promotion, at any rate to posts of a supervisory nature, are not easily subjected to the examination process. Should future developments in the administrative art enable us more accurately to assess the essential promotional characteristics—such as personality, leadership, breadth of vision, judgment—the competitive examination might well come into its own in this field. Examinations for promotion are effective to-day where specialised knowledge is an important requirement and the general organisation of the range of posts in question renders alternative methods of lesser value. Such is the position in the Customs and Excise department, where the posts of surveyor, distributed widely over the country, are filled by examination from officers of the next lower grade who have eighteen years' service to their credit. This is an exception to the normal promotional practice in the British Civil Service.

Attempts to introduce promotional examinations elsewhere, especially in the United States of America and the Dominions, have not been crowned with success. Alternative methods of determining merit have therefore been sought and the general trend is towards the adoption of a system of formalised reports by which each eligible officer is regularly assessed on a standardised basis. The working out and choice of appropriate report schemes is to-day in its vigorous experimental stage.

### THE PRESENT SYSTEM

The actual system of advancement and promotion in the British Civil Service is complicated by the general form of the organisation. In the first place, the department being the promotional unit, it is difficult, owing to the varying needs of the separate departments and the varying tempo of their expansion or contraction according to social requirements, to achieve equality of opportunity. Officials recruited through the same examination but drafted to different offices discover that the opportunity for advancement arises at varying periods. For example, members of the clerical class may receive this opportunity but a few years after appointment, or they may have to wait fifteen, twenty or even thirty years merely to come within the range of consideration.<sup>(1)</sup>

<sup>(1)</sup> The situation has been completely changed by the war, but a return to peacetime conditions is likely to restore the problem.

This state of affairs, which has always been usual, leads to much discontent throughout the Service.

The second complication in the advancement system arises from the three distinct courses of advancement that operate within the Service, viz. (1) advancement within the grade; (2) advancement between grades of the same class; and (3) advancement between the main classes.

Advancement within the grade is the normal experience of all civil servants and does not involve promotion in the ordinary sense of the word. On appointment the new officer has to serve a period of probation, during which he may be discharged if adjudged unsuitable for the work. This probationary period may be as short as six months, but in the main classes extends for one or two years. It is not usual, except for serious delinquency—a cause which would operate at any period of his career—for an officer to fail his probation. The procedure has become practically automatic and it is usual to give doubtful cases the benefit of the doubt. A more stringent probationary procedure is certainly desirable, but it is not easy to formulate the necessary steps to bring this about, while ensuring at the same time in fairness an equivalent standard of treatment to all entrants.

Since the range of duties performed by a grade must vary considerably between those assigned to the new entrant and those assigned to the most experienced member of the grade, a reasonable differentiation in pay is obtained by means of a salary scale fixed for each range. By this means an annual increment is granted to each officer until he attains the maximum amount fixed for the grade. Each year the official's efficiency and service are reviewed by his immediate superiors and, providing the report is favourable, his increment is approved. Here again a certain automatic element has entered into the procedure and it is unusual for an increment to be withheld unless the circumstances are exceptional.

A third element in the advancement system is the efficiency barrier. On reaching a certain point in the salary scale it is decreed that the officer shall be certified as competent to carry out the highest duties of his grade before further salary advances are granted. Few are stopped at this barrier. In truth, it is difficult to fix an assessable standard of competence and only in flagrant cases of incompetence can an officer safely be disqualified from further advancement. Supervisory officers' standards vary and the

staffs' representatives are vigilant to detect any suspicion of victimisation. Short of some definite objective test, or qualification such as the holding of the Basic Clerical Certificate as proposed in Chapter Four, it is not easy in a large and diverse Service to render the efficiency bar effective. It might be preferable to avoid the need for such a procedure by curtailing the length of the salary scale. For example, the basic grades of the clerical and executive classes have scales extending for 21 years, a period that is much too long for an advancement system to be operated automatically without considerable loss of efficiency.

Advancement between grades of the same class constitutes the normal promotion procedure in the Service and this is largely controlled by the departmental seniority lists. Not that seniority alone determines the choice of the selecting officers; it lays down rather the order in which the officers on the particular grade shall be considered for promotion. Many will be adjudged unfitted and 'passed over' in the final selection. The degree to which seniority will be taken into account will depend largely upon the particular standards held within the department at the particular period of review: it will be influenced by the supply of talent available and the number of posts falling vacant. Thus the number of officers passed over will vary infinitely from time to time and between department and department.

Under such circumstances the list works in this wise. During his early years of service the young officer is not greatly concerned with the question of promotion: he is too far down the list to make an early jump upwards a likelihood, unless his circumstances are both fortunate and exceptional. His annual increment comes as an automatic reward. But it is not good that at the very time when the young officer is engaged upon the more routine duties he should have so few incentives to natural ambition. There is a danger that he will get into the state of taking things as a matter of course. After some indefinite period, it may be ten years, it may unfortunately be over twenty, our officer comes within the range of promotion. If he has still retained some ambition and, perhaps, some freshness of mind he will begin to have hopes. Gradually the promotion line will move down towards him; some of his colleagues will be elevated to the next grade; many will be 'passed over'. At last his turn comes; he is next on the list. One day he is sent for, and all is well. But it is more likely that he will find himself in the majority and awaken

to discover that he, too, has been 'passed over'. Twenty or more years to go and nothing much to look forward to; the same tasks, the same office for half an official lifetime! a recessive process sets in; official ambitions fade from their peak; the officer looks for the most comfortable way of earning his salary, which he certainly will not find it difficult to do unless he is stupid.<sup>(1)</sup>

Surely, anyone who contemplates such a situation must agree that it is not one calculated to make the most of the initiative and resource of the staff. It may be agreed, perhaps, that the position is not quite as it has been outlined here, that an officer once 'passed over' is not necessarily done with for good (and this to a certain degree is true), but in the main it will be discovered that, given the situation of the general classes as indicated, the seniority test must work very much in the way detailed above. To state, however, that this is how seniority works is not to apportion even the major part of the blame to the seniority principle, since the real trouble clearly lies with the staff organisation that has been evolved. Nevertheless, the fact that the normal officer has only a real chance of promotion during a limited segment of his career suggests that official talents reaching their greatest development outside that period may well fail to receive the encouragement necessary for their complete fruition.

#### ANNUAL REPORTS AND PROMOTION BOARDS

After the First World War the staffs' representatives gave considerable thought to the question of promotion and the National Whitley Council produced a scheme which led to the introduction of the annual report system<sup>(2)</sup> and the constitution of promotion boards in each department. The new system, so soon as it was satisfactorily working, removed many of the inconsistencies of the unregulated methods that had hitherto operated, but, partly because it could not increase the number of available promotions, it did not receive the staffs' complete approval.

The promotion board usually includes the chief officials of the department and sits whenever there are vacancies to be filled, to weigh carefully the reports and other available information on which the merits of the eligible officers may be assessed. In carrying out this procedure the order of the seniority list is usually

(1) This outline applies with special force to the clerical officer, who has a long salary scale and is employed in numerous offices.

(2) Described in Appendix 3, p. 175.

followed, and a process of elimination is adopted. In the main the promotion board seems more likely to go further down the list rather than to return to those further up who have previously been considered and passed over—perhaps on many occasions.

The staff may make representations to the promotion board through the Whitley machinery, but usually they reserve the right to criticise the final policy rather than to make definite recommendations on behalf of individuals. In a few instances the promotion board interviews likely candidates and the staff co-operates in this procedure, but generally speaking the whole process is carried out informally, and with the minimum amount of advertisement.<sup>(1)</sup>

In the long run the promotion board must take full responsibility for the decisions arrived at, and the proof of its competence will be reflected in the general efficiency of the organisation. The making of the final choice is essentially a subjective process, depending ultimately upon the considered opinions of the chief and his deputies. The virtue of the promotion board procedure, when it is properly worked, is that steps may be taken to ensure that all the relevant data are in the hands of the selecting officers. They will not then be in such danger of reaching a decision upon an inadequate basis of fact.

#### APPEALS MACHINERY

Any officer 'passed over' in the promotion process has the right to appeal to the head of his department. This appeals machinery is sparingly used, for it is generally felt that to challenge the chief's judgment is not a safe way of demonstrating that the decision challenged is an unsound one. Facilities are usually given to an officer who so desires to see the head for an informal chat on the subject, during which interview his hopes may be tactfully reinstated. Such contacts are not necessarily worthless in a sphere in which personal contacts are increasingly difficult to maintain. The subordinate officer will be enabled to make suitable observations on his own behalf and officers who take this opportunity to state their case often subsequently receive promotion.

The experience of the Australian public services deserves brief reference in this connection. The Public Service Act of 1922, in

<sup>(1)</sup> See *Civil Service Staff Relationships*, p. 134, for details of the interesting Admiralty promotional scheme in which the staff co-operates.

regularising promotion procedure, laid it down that all promotions should be gazetted provisionally and that officers should be permitted to appeal against a promotion before it was confirmed. Such appeals, which are made in writing, are considered by the Public Service Board and careful investigations are carried out before a decision is reached.

This appeals machinery has been extensively operated and the number of appellants had increased considerably in the years preceding the war. But the alacrity with which certain officers take advantage of the procedure is no proof of its satisfactoriness. In the circumstances the officers concerned would be foolish not to take advantage of the opportunity offered. The Public Service Board is satisfied that no better system is practicable, while the department cannot be unmindful of the fact that in those cases where the Board supersedes its judgment responsibility for any adverse outcome of the changes made can be effectively shifted from its own shoulders. The staff does not give the system unequivocal support and there has been much agitation on the part of certain of the staff associations.

Against the undoubted satisfaction of the successful appellants must be placed the chagrin of an equivalent number of displaced promotees and the disappointment of the large number of unsuccessful applicants. The Board's decisions, although based upon a fair appraisal of the evidence laid before them, can never come as near to the truth as the decisions of the administrator who knows intimately the needs of his organisation, and consequently are arbitrary in some instances at least. Nor can it be ignored that the system is bound to reduce administrative efficiency by dividing the responsibility for promotions and weakening the authority of the departmental chief when so many of his subordinates are positively encouraged to lodge complaints against his decisions.

While some form of appeals machinery is clearly required to safeguard members of the staff against definite attempts at victimisation, it is equally certain that such machinery should be sparingly employed, and that officers making groundless complaints should receive adequate discouragement. The informal method more commonly employed in the British Civil Service is preferable, even as an indication of the existence of a reasonably tolerant spirit, without which no human institution can work satisfactorily.

### PROMOTION BETWEEN CLASSES

There is still the third main type of advancement in the British Civil Service to consider: transfers and promotions between the main classes as distinct from promotions between grades of the same class.

At the outset it should be pointed out that in certain departmental organisations, grades of different classes form part of the same hierarchy: thus in many cases the direct avenue of promotion is from general clerical to junior executive, all the higher posts being graded as executive and not as super-clerical. Such instances do not fall within this present category.

Where separate class hierarchies exist, promotion from class to class must be counted as abnormal. In theory the three main classes, recruited from distinct educational strata, consist of different types of agent each of which has its own particular sort of function to perform: this division of labour differentiation can too easily be exaggerated in the administrative-clerical sphere for there is no reason whatever why certain individuals coming in at one level should not prove eminently suitable at another. Unless, however, such persons manage to pass the appropriate entrance examinations, which are open to serving civil servants falling within prescribed age limits, they will find the whole weight of the organisation, with its myriad of vested interests, against their transfer to a more suitable official environment. One of the chief criticisms of the British Civil Service is that there is no organised method of getting the square pegs out of the round holes. For example, a linguist on the clerical grade in one department will find no easy path to an allowance post for the ability to use foreign languages in another; while a born administrator (they are rare enough), who enters by the clerical class examination will be fortunate to occupy his right niche before he retires. The result is something more than frustration to the particular individual; it is an irreparable loss to the community.

There are, let it be admitted, many cases of promotion from the clerical to the executive and fewer from the executive to the administrative class, but they are generally unplanned and fortuitous. When the occasion for such a transfer arises it is more likely to be the man-on-the-spot rather than the best-man-available who will be promoted. A few years before the present war a new piece of machinery was set up whereby heads of departments may recommend promising junior officers for transfer

to higher classes in other departments, selection being left to a special committee. Thus a clerical or an executive officer in a department where there is no administrative staff may now be recommended for an administrative post elsewhere. This is undoubtedly a step in the right direction—it was actually proposed by the Reorganisation Committee in 1920—but so far it has not been very extensively employed. Wartime transfers and promotions cannot afford decisive experience as they are all on an acting basis.

#### SPECIAL METHODS OF SELECTION

There are other ways of selecting civil servants for special posts. When the Unemployment Assistant Board<sup>(1)</sup> was constituted in 1934, applications for transfer to the various grades were invited from serving civil servants and the final choice was made by means of selection boards. This method is often adopted for special posts and departmental heads are sometimes asked to recommend officials with special qualifications. In this way members of the clerical staffs may fill specialist posts (if they have the requisite qualifications) and, on the other hand, members of the professional classes may be transferred to administrative posts.

But the system, in so far as it is a system, is extremely haphazard and a carefully worked out scheme is still to be sought. In order to equalise opportunities as between the different departments, schemes for pooling promotions have been advocated by the staff. By this method officers adjudged fit for promotion would be entered into a central pool, from which selections would be made as vacancies arose, the selected officer being transferred to a new department if necessary. There are many arguments against this scheme. The staffs of the favoured departments object to the restriction of their own opportunities, even if it means a better deal for their less fortunate fellows: the departments object to receiving officers trained in another field while they have competent officers on their own junior grade: above all there is the technical difficulty of obtaining an equivalent standard of competence as between the various entrants to the pool and of applying the correct standards of assessment at the selection stage. There is at least one reasonably successful pool in the Civil Service. In the Post Office, clerical assistants are eligible after five years' service to enter a pool for promotion to the clerical class.

(1) Now known as the Assistance Board.



But the routine work of this particular grade is not highly specialised and should form a sound basis of experience for the ordinary clerical work of any department; consequently the above strictures on the pool machinery do not apply with much force to this particular case. A year or two before the present war a pool for the selection of clerical officers for executive officerships was inaugurated in the Post Office.

It should be added that since Reorganisation the administrative class has been considered as proper to the whole Service and so, in theory, presents a kind of general Service pool for promotions within the class. The suggestion that this class is a real Service class is reinforced by the rule that appointments to the highest administrative posts are subject to the approval of the Prime Minister.

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The complexity of the promotion problem has now been outlined and the impression given, perhaps, that the position in the British Civil Service is chaotic. This is, however, not the whole truth. Promotion is affected by so many cross-currents that in an evolving system it would be surprising to discover a neatly contrived system of selection. It would be preferable to regard the present situation as having reached an advanced experimental stage and to suggest that both experience and research will in the not distant future bring considerable improvements.

The arrangement in the social state of the available abilities of the community in those positions in which the highest return in communal welfare will be forthcoming is an objective that transcends the present Civil Service sphere and is a matter to which further reference will be made in our concluding chapter.

## CHAPTER SIX

### STAFF CO-OPERATION

IT HAS been invariably the practice of Governments—and in this they have been no more enlightened than the private employer—to discourage, in the days of their early growth, the development of associations of employees whose aim was to protect the interests of their class. Blinded by the passionate interactions of men whose interests, to themselves at least, appeared to be diametrically opposed and uninstructed as to the subsequent needs of the structure, the destiny of which they were unable to foresee, both leader and subordinate blundered half-consciously towards the new staff relationship which administrative integration had rendered inevitable.

The legalisation of the trade union by the Act of 1871 did not greatly affect the position of the Civil Service staff association. Early associational activity was decidedly guerilla in character and it was not until 13th February, 1906, when Mr. Sidney Buxton, the new Postmaster-General, announced to the staff that he was prepared to recognise any properly constituted association and to receive representations through its secretary or other suitable representative, that a real drive to build up a live trade union movement within the Service began. In fact, the period preceding the First World War was one of vigorous campaigning for full recognition in the wider official field and it was during this period that many of the chief associations were founded. Progress was still anything but easy. It is nevertheless true to state that by the time the younger members began to stream into the armies in 1914 the principle of collective bargaining had been fully accepted as applicable to the Civil Service. It replaced the less efficient method of the memorial, the chief means of airing grievances up to 1906.

It is still possible for the staff to make representations by this means, but in view of the existence of more efficacious methods the memorial is not now extensively used and, when it is, it is usually employed for individual cases that do not easily fit into the wider context of staff negotiation.

The whole field of Civil Service occupations is now covered by a network of associations or trade unions, which, however, by the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act of 1927, are no longer permitted to affiliate to the wider trade union movement. These associations form the essential core of the present system of staff organisation and, especially in the case of the larger ones covering the lower grades in the manipulative and clerical sphere, have achieved a high degree of organisational efficiency. The whole structure of Whitleyism, shortly to be described, depends entirely upon the associational basis. It is no exaggeration to say that if, at the present state of administrative development, with its essential need for avenues of discussion between the staff and the administration, the various associations did not exist, they would have to be invented. Direct contacts are maintained between the associations and the Treasury, particularly on questions of remuneration, which naturally loom with great importance in the minds of the membership and are therefore topics of considerable power value to the associational officials who now constitute a not unimportant professional hierarchy within the larger community.

In the furthering of their programme for the improvement of working conditions and rewards, the larger associations take every advantage of the uses of advertisement, and the Treasury is compelled to consider political repercussions when attempting to assess the equity of the claim being advanced at the moment. The importance of this new factor, certainly to the staffs concerned and in the long run to the community (which might conceivably make a bad bargain) was demonstrated by the departmental classes case which went to arbitration in 1936.

The Treasury had just concluded an agreement with the Civil Service Clerical Association covering the pay scales and relative numbers of the clerical officer and clerical assistant grades (largely as an outcome of the Tomlin Commission's recommendations) but showed some reluctance in pursuing the same negotiations in respect of the various departmental classes in the clerical field. The diversity of classes which arose in certain departments, contrary to the intentions of the Reorganisation Committee of 1920 (albeit supported in most cases by the local staffs), had long been subjected to intensive criticism by the rest of the Service and had naturally given rise to many anomalies within the departments concerned. Under the influence of the

still powerful departmentalist autonomies, the Treasury desired that each case should be pursued separately. Not only was this attitude opposed by the associations, but by the threat of a 'stay-in' strike (which in practice could not have hoped to receive the general support of the Service), a widespread advertisement of the case in the press was obtained, and the Treasury, under the pressure both of public opinion and of Parliament, were compelled to agree to all the cases being dealt with by the Arbitration Court simultaneously. The result was a clear victory for the staffs concerned.

#### ARBITRATION AND WHITLEYISM

But to return to our main theme: during the First World War new ideas were in the air and it was found that the autocratic attitude of the Treasury in respect of claims for improved remuneration was in need of modification. On 2nd November, 1916, the Government announced that an arbitration tribunal would be set up to decide questions of wages arising between the Government and its civil employees, and early in 1917 the Civil Service Arbitration Board was established. The Board was empowered to conciliate as well as to arbitrate and a large number of the cases brought before it were settled after reference back by the Board to the parties concerned. Of the 222 cases dealt with by the Board during its existence, 91 were settled by conciliation.

On the grounds that the Board had been set up as a wartime measure and that with the introduction of the Whitley system its existence was no longer necessary, the Board was abolished by the Government early in 1922. There was an immediate outcry in the Service and the following year the Government again accepted the principle of compulsory arbitration in relation to the Civil Service, which was subsequently brought within the scope of the Industrial Courts Act of 1919. It is now the practice for all claims for revised salary scales on which the parties are unable to agree (which is often the case) to be brought before the court. The court consists of an independent chairman and two others appointed by the Minister of Labour to represent the Government and the staff respectively. The award of the court is invariably implemented by the Government, and only Parliament has the power to override its decisions. In 1936 the Civil Service side was separated from the industrial court under the title of

Civil Service Arbitration Tribunal, but the procedure continued unchanged.

The system of industrial councils, representative of both employers and employed, which was proposed by the Reconstruction Committee (1917-18) under the chairmanship of the Speaker of the House of Commons, the Rt. Hon. J. H. Whitley, had its inception in wartime conditions when the works council movement, sponsored by the advanced elements among the workers, had made such considerable headway. In industry, the field for which it was designed, the new system failed to achieve widespread success, while the Government of the day was loth to apply it to the Civil Service and only did so under pressure from the Service itself. It is, nevertheless, in the official sphere that the Whitley Councils—as they came to be called—have achieved the degree of success they were destined to achieve.

A National Council for the Civil Service was set up to deal with matters falling outside the spheres of the departments as such, while a separate departmental council was instituted for each department. The National Council has 54 members: half appointed by the Government as the Official Side from among persons of standing (civil servants or others) and including at least one representative each of the Treasury and the Ministry of Labour; the other half, known as the Staff Side, appointed by the various staff associations in accordance with a definite allocation. The departmental councils, built up on the same principles, are smaller and usually consist entirely of officers of the particular department.

The departmental councils are permitted to report to the National Council matters which, while they are not of a general nature, fall within the sphere of more than one department; otherwise there is no direct line of appeal between the National and the departmental councils. Each system has its own carefully defined field of activity and the connecting link is the Treasury, on whom the onus of all decisions must ultimately rest. Decisions are reached by agreement between the two sides of the Council and are operative as soon as the chairman of the Official and Staff sides have appended their signatures. It is, of course, not possible in theory for the overruling power of the Government to be negatived, as the complete adoption of this procedure might well necessitate, but actually the Official Side does not give its consent until it has assured itself that the proposals are acceptable in those

quarters where effective opposition could materialise. The constitution of the Whitley system effectively safeguards the power of the Treasury, which is in a position not only to ensure that its views are shared by the Official Side but also to suggest that the stumbling-block of departmental autonomy still stands in the way of reform, should an excuse appear to be politic.

It is laid down that 'the objects of the National Council shall be to secure the greatest measure of co-operation between the State in its capacity as employer, and the general body of civil servants in matters affecting the Civil Service, with a view to increased efficiency in the public service combined with the well-being of those employed; to provide machinery for dealing with grievances, and generally to bring together the experience and different points of view of representatives of the administrative, clerical and manipulative Civil Service'. Clearly if the objectives outlined in this pronouncement are effectively attained, a great piece of co-operative machinery has been introduced into the administrative field. ✓

#### WHITLEYISM'S ACHIEVEMENTS

Actually, although considerable achievements can be recorded for the new system, many of its advantages may be said to have been of a negative rather than a positive nature, and many of its most ardent supporters have been constrained publicly to state their disappointment. Nor is all the criticism from the one side. In giving evidence before the Tomlin Commission certain heads of departments and others strongly favoured the abolition of the system; on the other hand heads of other departments were convinced of its usefulness and with equal vigour recommended its retention.

In the general administrative field the National Whitley Council has been responsible for some excellent reforms, notably those springing from the adoption of the Reorganisation and Promotions Reports, already discussed in previous chapters, but it is in the nature of things that opportunities for spectacular achievement of this sort should arise only at wide intervals and it is not surprising that the system's chief sphere of usefulness should have fallen within the ambit of the various departmental councils.

In the organisation of training schemes, co-operation in the promotions system, the consideration of suggestions by the staff, and the hundred and one minor matters of interest to the staff

that continually arise in the administration of a large department, these councils have been of considerable value. But their efficiency has varied from department to department. In some offices Whitleyism has been a great success, in others, possibly the majority, its achievement has been only moderate. Everything has clearly depended upon the spirit with which it has been worked. Where the highest degree of co-operativeness has been forthcoming from both the staff and the official sides, success has been certain. Where the higher officials have viewed the system as an encroachment upon their inherent prerogatives, and where the staff has confronted it in a selfish attitude of taking without giving, failure has been inevitable.

That the limits of co-operativeness are not easy to define is instanced by the example of the Customs and Excise departmental council system which in 1921 participated to such effect in the economy drive, which was then in progress, that the Geddes 'Axe' Committee found little to do when it reached that department. When it is realised how devastating might have been the effect upon the staff of any suspicion that their representatives were playing into the hands of the 'enemy', it is plain that this policy could have been successfully implemented only under the conditions of strong mutual confidence.

Rarely has Whitley co-operation reached such heights and usually the departmental councils have been limited to the discussion of minor points of procedure in which they have been able to convey the views of the staff to the official representatives and so to assist in the determination of the final decision. Their actual influence has depended partly upon the quality of their representative elements, but in no small way upon the degree of autocratic or democratic sentiment with which the head of the department has been prepared to approach those staff problems which fall within the Whitley sphere. A reference to the functions assigned to the system will show that a very much less restricted field of action was intended. Indeed, some departments have set up Whitley sub-committees which make an active and useful contribution to the ordinary process of administration.

Notable examples of this development are afforded by the Whitley systems of the Ministries of Labour and Health. In the former the Whitley departmental council worked through sixteen standing committees; in the latter through four standing committees and special *ad hoc* committees set up from time to

time. The four standing committees of the Ministry of Health fulfil the following functions:

(1) The examination of the results obtained by the Department's scheme for considering the suggestions, in regard to the improvement of office machinery and organisation, submitted by members of the staff.

(2) The provision of facilities for the further education of members of the staff.

(3) The receipt and making of suggestions for economy in the use of stationery.

(4) The organisation and administration of the scheme for the joint collection of subscriptions to charitable objects.

The co-operation of the subordinate staff in matters of this sort greatly assists the smooth working of the administration, but there is reason for disappointment that the staff's contribution in the administrative sphere has not been more widely in evidence.

However, there is no reason to be unduly pessimistic. Good work is being done and even in those departments where Whitleyism has achieved its fewest successes the mere existence of machinery through which the staff can air its grievances must act as a brake upon any tendency to arbitrariness on the part of the controlling staff. Although it may appear to the rank and file that the people at the top always insist upon their own courses, it is an undoubted fact that those courses will to a certain extent already have been predetermined by the degree of advertisement they may have been expected to receive in discussions with the staff. Such discussions cannot be refused under the new system and much will depend upon the ability with which the staff representatives grasp their opportunities. •

Furthermore, such is the complexity of the modern administrative unit that some method of ascertaining the views of the rank and file is essential to the administration, and if the avenues of enlightenment are carefully organised and vitally infused with enthusiasm, as is the case under an efficient Whitley and associational system, so much the better. For this reason alone—a question of practice as opposed to theory—the modern administrator is becoming more and more convinced of the need for the encouragement of staff co-operation in the Civil Service.

#### IMPORTANCE OF STAFF CO-OPERATION

Organised staff co-operation has many general advantages.



It assists powerfully in the dissemination of similar ideas throughout the staffs of an administration in which the tendencies towards particularism are certain to be strong. In this, even if by merely co-ordinating foci of opposition (which is certainly not its chief *métier*), it assists the centralised official agencies in their task of control—which will be briefly discussed in the following chapter. Furthermore, a co-operative system is essential to movements for further education and to the various sports and social activities which are strongly sponsored both nationally and departmentally by the authorities in Britain. Lastly, and especially in the form of Whitleyism, it acts as an important agency for the concentration of information about the Civil Service and its working and, in view of the small attention paid to the subject of research in administration, this factor may well prove much more important than is generally realised.

In this connection one successful experiment has already been referred to—the setting up of the Institute of Public Administration in 1922. While standing outside the associational and Whitley field, it is nevertheless essentially an example of staff co-operation at its best. Whatever support it has received from the heights—and its inception was sponsored by men of the calibre of Lord Haldane and Mr. Graham Wallas—it has depended entirely upon the personal drive of individuals interested in the advancement of their profession and, indeed, has had to meet some opposition and no little cold-shouldering from official spheres. While its achievement to date may be more justly assessed upon the quality than the volume of its support, the Institute undoubtedly represents an essential factor in the future development of the administrative art, which cannot continue to progress merely by rule-of-thumb methods.

#### STAFF CO-OPERATION IN OTHER SPHERES

A brief reference to the development of staff co-operation in other administrative spheres will be of some interest in this context. Abroad, notably in Germany and Roumania, staff co-operation in the pursuance of administrative studies has been developed much further than here. Not only have research institutes been organised but an extensive system of staff colleges for the study of administrative questions has been set up with considerable success. In Germany too, under the pre-Nazi régime, civil servants were permitted to co-operate in the political

system much more extensively than in Britain and there was attached to the Reichstag a committee on Civil Service affairs on which civil servants could serve. The constitution of the Economic Council also permitted the participation of civil servants. The rank and file, however, although they had the right to take cases to the administrative courts, were not granted the same facilities for day-to-day participation in personnel matters as is possible through the British Whitley Councils.

The degree and trend of staff co-operation in the different Civil Service environments depend upon a variety of factors and vary considerably even within the same community. For example, the local government service in Britain has, owing to the peculiar conditions of employment under the local authorities, paid more attention to encouraging the acquirement of professional qualifications by the rank and file than to the development of methods of internal co-operation. In France, the absence of a centralised Civil Service system and the influences of syndicalism among the workers in general have impelled the staff associations to seek vigorously for the introduction of a general Civil Service code by which the administrators of all grades should be protected, and to attempt, in the departmental field, to achieve an equal participation with the administrative leaders in the actual working of the office. Neither policy has been attended with success: the first because the very lack of centralisation that made it seem so eminently desirable tended also to render its achievement doubly difficult: the second because it represented an objective which in the nature of things could not fail to prove unworkable. In so far as syndicalist trends have had any sort of success in the French Civil Service, the result has been to stress the equalitarian element in certain staff processes, e.g. in selection for promotion where staff representatives have been admitted to the selecting boards in some ministries, with a consequent loss in administrative efficiency.

As we have already seen, in Australia staff enterprise has been directed mainly towards the application to the Service of the system of industrial arbitration which has been developed so far in the Commonwealth. The effect of the democratic ideal of equality has in Australia, as in France, tended in certain directions to reduce rather than to increase administrative efficiency, e.g. in the stringent use of the appeals system in connection with promotions. While it is essential that there should be effective safe-

guards against the rule of favouritism, it is not well that the responsibility of the directing staff should be so hedged round by rules and regulations that they are compelled always to play for safety.

\*       \*       \*       \*

In conclusion, the need for the highest degree of staff co-operation and goodwill in the working of the administrative machinery must be accepted as axiomatic. Although a system of staff committees imposed from above might be workable if an effective alternative were not available, there is little doubt that the spontaneous formation of associations ensures a more active and independent contribution and that the ingenious wedding of staff and official interests, as in the Whitley scheme, presents a system which (provided it is worked in the right spirit) is of incalculable value to the administration. Furthermore, it is clearly essential that the system of staff participation should receive the full support not only of every member of the subordinate staff but also of those in the supervisory grades who might be tempted to adopt an autocratic—but strictly anti-administrative—point of view.<sup>(1)</sup>

<sup>(1)</sup> A fuller exposition of the British system will be found in my *Civil Service Staff Relationships* (1943).

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE PROBLEM OF CONTROL

**THE PROBLEM** of control and co-ordination of the administration is one of the most important in the whole realm of administrative investigation. The managing board of a private concern is faced by few of the difficulties of the large-scale co-ordination of staff by which the Government is confronted. In theory the Cabinet, as the nation's supreme executive, has complete control of the administration; in practice, control operates through four different channels:

- (1) through the Treasury in virtue of its guardianship of the public purse and its favourable position to overhaul the techniques of administration;
- (2) through special agencies set up to supervise particular administrative functions; namely, the Civil Service Commission to control recruitment, the Ministry of Works to provide accommodation, and the Stationery Office to co-ordinate office supplies and printing;
- (3) through the ministerial heads of departments, who are responsible to Parliament for the general administration of their offices; and
- (4) through the financial criticism of the independently appointed Comptroller and Auditor-General and of the Select Committee on Public Accounts, appointed by the House of Commons.

From the point of view of personnel administration the two governmental organisations of real importance are the Treasury and the Civil Service Commission, although (as it has already been made evident) the considerable degree of departmental autonomy has far-reaching repercussions throughout the sphere of staff organisation.

The logic of governmental development, guided by the consolidation of Cabinet rule, has inevitably placed the chief managerial functions of the Civil Service in the hands of the

Treasury. Not only has the function of issuing minutes and rules by which the Civil Service is regulated been delegated to it as the most convenient agent of the Government, but the presence in the Treasury of that most important minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, has ensured the concentration therein of the financial control which, through the determination and payment of salaries, must always exercise the decisive voice in the settlement of Civil Service affairs.

Characteristically the permanent head of the Treasury is known also as 'Head of the Civil Service' and the location within his control of those parts of the general organisation which deal with staff matters ensures that this latter title shall have something more than a ceremonial significance. Until 1919 the Treasury was organised into divisions each of which supervised a number of Government departments, but in accordance with recommendations both of the MacDonnell Commission (1912-14) and the Machinery of Government Committee (1918), the ministry was reorganised on a functional basis; all questions of staff procedure being henceforth concentrated in an Establishments Department. It is generally recognised that this reorganisation has greatly increased the administrative control of the Treasury. Its officers are now in a better position to discover the principles needed for the efficient employment of the personnel and to keep in touch with the actual conditions and needs of the various departments.<sup>(1)</sup>

But the Treasury's leadership in staff organisation is tempered to no small degree by the maintenance of the essential theory of ministerial responsibility. For example, the Treasury issues general regulations, e.g. on such subjects as the civil servant's engagement in outside business, publication of books, etc., containing official information, bankruptcy, and the soliciting of outside influence for advancement, but the departments may decide, subject to Treasury consent, the conditions of service of special departmental grades and also on such matters as the officials' participation in local government. It has already been pointed out how the general schemes of organisation may be radically modified to meet the special needs of the separate departments. The general testimony of heads of departments to

<sup>(1)</sup> During the present war there has been an expansion of the Treasury's investigating staff under the heading of Organisation and Methods and further development has been recommended by the Select Committee on National Expenditure in their 16th Report (1941-42).

the Tomlin Commission was that Treasury control had not been found burdensome and that there was never any difficulty in obtaining satisfaction where the special needs of the particular department demanded variations from the general procedure. Constitutionally, it would be possible for an establishment question to be taken to the minister and, if necessary, placed by him before the Cabinet, but in practice the matter would be settled between the ministry and the Establishments Department of the Treasury.

Each ministry has an Establishments officer who is in charge of the branch dealing with personnel questions, and who acts as liaison with the Treasury. It was proposed at one time that these officers should form a committee with which officers of the Establishments Department might freely consult, but the inception of the Whitley system appears to have made such a formal arrangement unnecessary. Under present conditions there is free and close communication between the Treasury and the departments. The Treasury also has power (under Order in Council, 1910) to order an examination of the staffing of departments at intervals of five years, but the efficiency of normal contacts and procedure has been held to render this provision unnecessary.

The principle underlying the British system of centralised and delegated staff control was commented upon by Sir Warren Fisher to the Tomlin Commission. He said:

'We touched on Treasury control in regard to the machinery of Government. If I may repeat myself, I attach enormous importance to recognition of the fact that this is not a purely Treasury function. It is a Service function, and if the heads of these great departments are the right men to be there, they clearly ought to be in the closest contact on all major Service problems, and the Treasury should be simply the nucleus, or the body to call the conference.'<sup>(1)</sup>

This doctrine of the dissemination of responsibility for the efficient co-ordination of staff organisation must become of increasing importance in the integration of administrative organisations of the future.

At an early date it was recognised that one personnel function at least ought not to be left in the hands of the administrative authorities, viz. that of recruitment, and as we have already seen, an independent appointing commission was set up in 1855. The three Civil Service Commissioners are appointed by Order in Council. They hold office during the King's pleasure. The Commission is not a subordinate department of the Treasury but

(1) Tomlin evidence, qn. 18,786.

reports direct to the Crown. On the other hand, the paramount importance of the Treasury in the formulation of staff requirements postulates constant consultation between the Commission and the Treasury and between the Commission and the separate departments. In case of disagreement the Treasury decides, but as regards quasi-judicial decisions on such questions as age, health, character and examination awards, viz. those concerned with the actual technique of appointment, the Commissioners are not subject to political or administrative review. It is clear, then, that the Civil Service Commissioners, while lacking the complete independence of the Comptroller and Auditor-General, or the judges of the High Court, have nevertheless the degree of independence needed to render the process of appointment free from outside interference. With the accomplishment of the task of recruitment their function ends.

There is one other direction in which the function of personnel administration has of recent years tended to become devolved from the Treasury: the fixing of salary rates. The practice of submitting rejected claims for readjustment of salary scales to the Civil Service Arbitration Tribunal for settlement has enabled the Treasury to take stricter views on its function of protecting the public purse. While the final decision was still in its own hands, it was forced to take into account the need for giving equitable treatment to the staff. Now the Treasury case is strongly opposed to the staff case (as presented by the associations) and the final decision is left to the Court, care being taken to ensure that all the relevant facts are in the hands of the Court and that the current dire condition of the public finances has not been understressed! Paradoxically the loss of full powers of decision in the fixing of salary rates has strengthened the Treasury's position in presenting its own viewpoint.

#### PERSONNEL AGENCIES ABROAD

In the Dominions and the United States of America, the example of Britain in setting up a Civil Service Commission has been closely followed, but usually the powers of the Commission go beyond the sphere of recruitment and include the supervision of other administrative arrangements.

For example, the Public Service Board in Australia carries out the functions not only of the British Civil Service Commission but also of the Establishments Department of the Treasury. It not

only regulates recruitment, transfers, increments and promotions, but is also given authority

'to devise means for effecting economies and promoting efficiency in the management and working of departments by improved organisation and procedure, closer supervision, limitation of staffs, improvements in training of officers, avoidance of unnecessary expenditure, checking expenditure as to adequacy of value received, institution of standard practice, advising upon systems and methods as to contracts and supplies, etc.'<sup>(1)</sup>

The Board is also given full powers to classify the personnel of the Federal Service and to authorise the granting of special allowances where such are deemed necessary. Clearly, the Australian Public Service Board is visualised as the chief controlling authority in all matters pertaining to administration. It is true that in practice it has not found it possible adequately to fulfil all the functions with which it was invested; e.g. on its own recommendation the task of making promotions was handed back to the heads of departments as being clearly a function which only the official in close contact with the staff can efficiently perform. On the other hand the Board has been able, through the agency of its special inspectorate, to recommend many improvements in the organisation of certain departments. Such recommendations are usually adopted, for the Board's disinterestedness and prestige are unquestioned.

The Federal Civil Service Commission of the United States of America, set up under the Pendleton Act of 1883, occupies in many respects a position more closely similar to that of Australia than to that of Britain. Besides the task of recruitment, it has the function of controlling promotions (a matter which, however, it has never taken into its hands), and also of administering the various efficiency procedures introduced into the Service. The American Civil Service Commission has less independence than is customary elsewhere. The three Commissioners (not more than two of whom are to belong to one of the two main parties) are appointed by the President, with the approval of the Senate, 'to aid the President as he may request' in preparing the necessary rules. In consequence of the peculiarities of the American Constitution, and especially the embodiment therein of the doctrine of the separation of powers (under which, for example, the President, although holding a controlling position, is unable to interfere in the actual organisation of the departments), the tendency has been to

<sup>(1)</sup> Board's *First Report*, p. 5.



assign certain functions of personnel organisation to other agencies.

'In the Federal Service there are a number of examining agencies including the Public Health Service and the Foreign Service, while other aspects of personnel work are dealt with by the Personnel Classification Board, the Bureau of the Budget, the Employees' Compensation Commission, and the Wage Boards for the navy yards. Broadly speaking, one may hazard the generalisation that the underlying trend of the last two decades has not been favourable to the traditional Civil Service Commission.'<sup>(1)</sup>

Outside the Anglo-Saxon countries it is not usual to set up a Commission to which functions of personnel control are delegated. Control may be either exercised by government regulation, as in Germany, or it may be left almost entirely to the departments as in France; although it must be remembered that in the latter instance there is a minimum of central regulation and the *Conseil d'Etat* is competent to assist the government in its task of administration by the issuance of decrees dealing with administrative matters. It is interesting to note that Switzerland has followed the example of Britain in one direction: it has concentrated the function of staff control in the Federal Finance Department by locating therein a Federal Personnel office, whose duties include the review of methods and numbers of the staff, the preparation of personnel statistics and the drafting of bills, decrees, etc., touching upon staff matters.

#### IMPORTANCE OF ADMINISTRATIVE CO-ORDINATION

There cannot be two opinions as to the desirability of centralised co-ordination of the Government's administrative machinery, either from the point of view of economy or of ensuring the maximum advantage from administrative experience. However desirable it may be to delegate certain personnel functions to the different units, it is essential that the staff shall be organised in conformity with some general plan. There is a place for departmentalism, but its sphere must be restricted to reasonable proportions. Whether the control should be left entirely in the hands of the Treasury is quite another matter. In certain quarters there is considerable antagonism to the theory of Treasury control, which, it is considered, works often with a parsimonious rather than an administrative aim. Thus, the staff side of the National Whitley Council proposed to the Tomlin Commission that the main functions performed by the Establishments Department of

<sup>(1)</sup> *Trends in Public Administration*, by L. D. White, p. 245.

the Treasury should be transferred to an independent department for staffing<sup>(1)</sup> and that the functions of the Civil Service Commission should be expanded to cover such questions as transfers and promotions. It is suggested here that while this antagonism to Treasury control is understandable, it would not be removed by the mere transfer of the controlling duties to another organisation, for it is in many respects the natural reaction of those who have to face the non-fulfilment of all their aims. The fact that one section of the public service, the staff of which is subjected to precisely the same general conditions as the rest, can so protect the public interest and delimit the advantages to which the staff may aspire, is in many respects a minor miracle in administrative organisation. An easy and liberal Treasury would soon undermine public confidence and the Civil Service itself would quickly grasp the inestimable advantage of having a controlling power capable not only of refusing them such improvements as the general conditions do not appear to warrant, but also of standing as a just arbiter between them and the somewhat fickle manifestations of public opinion. In France, for example, both the civil servant and the community would, without the least doubt, gain considerably from the interposition of a firm controlling influence between the staff and the public.

While it is considered that the separation of certain staff functions from the central Treasury organisation would be unlikely to bring about the change in attitude which many of the sponsors of such proposals desire—since the inherent importance and power of the final wielder of financial control cannot, in the nature of things, be gainsaid—it is nevertheless quite possible that the separate organisation of such functions might have certain advantages. Much will depend upon the history and general organisation of the particular Service under review. In a comparatively manageable Service of the type of the Australian Commonwealth Service, it may be reasonable to concentrate all personnel matters within the control of an independent Public Service Board (remembering that even there this independence is strictly conditioned by the exigencies of public finance) but the same system might be quite unsuitable to the more complex organisation of the British Civil Service. In general it is a rule that an increasing complexity in machinery will lead to the

<sup>(1)</sup> This proposal received widespread support. It was recently considered and rejected by the Select Committee on National Expenditure.

devolution of separate functions to specialised organisations rather than the concentration of all functions under one control.

#### THE IDEA OF A GENERAL STAFF

The chief argument against the concentration of the functions of staff control and financial regulation is that the latter is apt to engender in the official a somewhat critical outlook and to render him less able to take the broad view required for the consideration of personnel problems. But this objection is not so serious as might first appear. Although dealt with by the same government department, the two types of function are assigned to different agents and, especially since the creation of the Establishment Department, a staff expert in questions of personnel organisation has been built up. Sir Warren Fisher suggested to the Tomlin Commission that the Treasury should be considered as a kind of general staff and that its administrative officers should be recruited not direct from the examination but by transfer from other departments, and that between these departments and the Treasury there should be a general flow of staff.

This concept of a general staff is important, for there is no doubt that the Civil Service needs such an organisation. The Tomlin Commission recommended that a small specially trained staff should overhaul continuously the machinery of Government; the officers to be chosen from the Service generally and the survey to be carried out jointly between officers of this staff and of the department for the time being under review. It is not clear whether the intention was that this staff should be attached to the Treasury or not. No such separate organisation has yet been set up and the functions it was proposed that it should perform are still within the province of the Treasury; that is, in so far as they are performed at all. That such a staff would need to maintain a close liaison with the Treasury goes without saying. In the main it would be preferable if it had a high degree of independence and was not in any way concerned with the normal duties of personnel administration. It would constitute a research agency rather than a control organisation.

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To sum up: the function of control is an all-important one in the general organisation of the Civil Service. It should be co-ordinated under a central office but not concentrated, since to be entirely effective it should be distributed throughout the

administration. Whether the chief personnel agency should form a part of the Treasury is a matter of convenience rather than of principle. In a service organised on the functional lines recommended by the Machinery of Government Committee, the organisation of the Government's personnel might well fall within the province of the Minister of Employment.

The ultimate control of the Civil Service is bound to rest in the hands of those who are responsible for the ordering of the country's finances and to attempt to create an artificial organisation would be so much waste of effort. The chief controlling agency will consequently consist of a central Establishments Department, whose task it will be to carry out the day-to-day duties of staff organisation, to issue the necessary rules and regulations and to see that the general personnel arrangements are properly carried out within the departments. This Establishments Department will be assisted by a small semi-independent staff, which will study efficiency methods and investigate the actual organisation of the separate departments. Each department will be left with a maximum amount of autonomy in staff regulation. It will appoint an Establishments Officer to control its own personnel agency and to act as a liaison officer with the Establishments Department.

There are certain staff functions which the central personnel office should not be called upon to perform. The appointment of staff should be carried out by an independent commission whose duties should be confined to recruitment alone. Recruitment is a function which not only requires independent manipulation to avoid the danger of political interference and favouritism but also needs specialised attention, and it is not expedient that it should be combined, as has been proposed, with such matters as transfers and promotion. There is abundant evidence that promotions cannot be centrally controlled and it is clear that this is a function which must be left to the departments themselves to perform. Only those on the spot are really competent to choose the staff for the higher posts. It is imperative, however, that the central agency should formulate such rules as are necessary to ensure that equitable and efficient standards of selection shall be applied. There is a case to be made for a central transfer agency for the maintenance of a reasonable degree of staff fluidity; this matter will be treated more fully in the following chapters.

PART II

TOWARDS THE FUTURE

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## CHAPTER ONE

### REFORM IN THE CIVIL SERVICE

THE MOST efficient institutions must fall far short of perfection. This is a truism. Yet, despite the abundant praise that has been showered upon the British Civil Service in the past—praise it has well merited—few will deny to-day that there are defects to be remedied. In a changing social environment, only the most carefully contrived and spontaneously motivated political machinery could be expected to avoid the wide gaps that tend constantly to arise between the actual and the ideal. To have attempted to define the ideal and to describe the actual, without making some effort to suggest the practicable, would have meant leaving our task half-done. It is the objective of this second part briefly to review some of the ground we have already covered, especially in relation to the recruitment, training and promotion of officials and to indicate, just as briefly, some of the lines of advance that appear to be desirable.

#### RECRUITMENT

The main problem of recruitment must be settled before the other staff problems can be squarely met. It was virtually settled in Britain with the introduction of the principle of open competition in 1870. The aim of the appointing authority must be the selection of the best available material from the wider community, while at the same time taking into full account the nation's total needs. All personal influences and predilections must be eliminated at this stage if the ultimate presuppositions of democracy are to be fulfilled. Equality of opportunity is an essential element in the State's recruitment system.

The principle of open competition can only be effectively adopted where there is a reasonably large number of similar posts to be filled, where there is a widespread desire among the right sort of people for appointment and where knowledge of a special technique is not required at the outset. The aim of this method is not to choose only the best, but to select from among

the types required a fair sample which will include some of the best. Furthermore a standard has to be set. In the case of recruitment for the various kinds of administrative work a general educational standard has been found to be the most suitable. To this end it is necessary to co-ordinate the various recruitment stages with the defined levels of the national educational system and, since some form of differentiation must therefore be made among the various recruits in order that the different types of administrative duties may be adequately provided for, the principle of equality of opportunity will only be maintained providing the educational system is democratically organised. There is still much room for improvement in this direction in Britain, although the percolation during recent years of many sons of the people through the old universities into the administrative class of the Civil Service conclusively demonstrates the advances that have been made.

The open competitive examinations may best consist of written papers which, if they have their manifest disadvantages, do ensure the absolute neutrality and impartiality of the test. In recent years (as already pointed out) there has been an increasing impulse from certain quarters to extend the use of the interview test into the normal competitive procedure. This is a tendency that needs to be very carefully watched as, however fair its present use may be, it reintroduces the possibility (attacked so vehemently by Macaulay and others) of patronage at the recruitment stage.

The critic may well reply that the interview test is demanded by the greater complexity of modern conditions. It may be said that the housewife does not choose a domestic servant, a factory foreman his worker, or a business man his clerk, and why, therefore, should the State select its civil servant, without a preliminary interview? The answer is final: the interviewer of the civil servant is not personally responsible for the consequences of his decisions; he does not usually know the conditions of the post to which the selected person is to be assigned; the great political advance which was made when the task of appointment was removed from the sphere of personal influences must on no account be sacrificed.

One further argument may be advanced by the critic. He may admit that for the general range of posts of a clerical or executive nature the arguments set down here are sound enough but that

appointment to the directing or administrative grades is of overwhelming importance and that the number of posts to be filled is small enough to permit of their specific requirements being laid down. It must be admitted that there is much more to be said for the interview test in this instance (although there is no evidence that, since the introduction of this method, the average quality of the entrant to the administrative class has been raised in any way) but it is even more important that the occupancy of the higher posts should not be influenced by personal or political considerations.

It is desirable that those persons who get through the open competition, but who are not fitted for the administrative sphere (and there are a few untrainables in all strata), should be eliminated during the probation period. To this end the present probation machinery should be considerably recast, with the provision of adequate safeguards to the candidate. It is better for both the Service and the individual appointed that administratively unsatisfactory material should be rejected at an early stage. Where an officer is rejected during probation, two important safeguards against victimisation are suggested: (i) the vacancy created should be filled by a promotion from the next lower class, the promotee to be selected from among candidates put forward by other departments and to be subjected to a similar probation test; (ii) the rejected new entrant should be returned to the Civil Service Commission who should have the option of appointing him to a different department, without comment as to his recent failure.<sup>(1)</sup>

Certain Civil Service appointments of a non-administrative nature may not lend themselves to the open competitive method. Where the number of posts is small and of a specialised nature, it will be necessary to prescribe certain technical qualifications and to make the final selection by interview. A large number of such competitions are at present carried out by the Civil Service Commission. The danger of favouritism may be considerable, yet the political repercussions are essentially less where the potential field of competition is limited and the technical requirements are carefully defined. Even in such instances it is desirable that a general written test of some sort should be imposed whenever the existence of a reasonable field of competition may justify such a policy. The steady growth of the proportion of professional men and technicians in the Government service must tend to

<sup>(1)</sup> This would be necessary in order not to prejudice him in the new department.



intensify this problem, but it would be as well to regard such experts as far as possible as belonging to their appropriate professions and subject to the normal professional rules and conditions, rather than as permanent civil servants. Their stay in the Service would in most cases last only for a limited time and the Government would have at its disposal the general experience of the profession. This is actually the position in a number of present instances. Where numbers of technical posts need to be filled on a permanent basis, the rules of recruitment appropriate to the administrative sphere should be applied.

### TRAINING AND PROMOTION

As we have already indicated in earlier chapters the important problems of training and promotion in the administrative sphere were being given a deal of general attention before the war, and developments, especially in the British Civil Service, were proceeding steadily. From the diversity of recent experience in training it is not easy to draw general conclusions, but the outstanding characteristic in this field is the lack of co-ordination, and the need for a central training agency is clearly evident.

There already exists a central organisation, the National Whitley Council, legally empowered to deal with matters of training. The constitution defines one of its functions as 'the encouragement of further education of civil servants and their training in higher administration and organisation'. So far the National Council has not paid a lot of attention to this problem; partly no doubt on account of the urgency of the other matters dealt with, but largely, it is suggested, because the general discussion of training problems has not, under existing conditions, appeared likely to prove fruitful.

With the departmental Whitley Councils, however, the position has been somewhat different. Wherever the staff has been actively interested in training the discussion has been brought to the departmental council: whenever the head of a department has been desirous of improving training methods the co-operation of the staff has been sought through the departmental council. And the co-operation of the staff, in all matters important, is doubly important in the case of training. Often the staff, eager to promote its own usefulness and desirous of being able to take advantage of any opportunities for advancement that might arise in the future, has taken a vigorous initiative in this matter.

While it is considered that a system of committees, on the lines of the Whitley Council organisation, competent to discuss problems touching the conditions and efficiency of the civil servant is essential to the smooth running of a general training scheme in any diverse administrative grouping, it is also necessary to build up an organisation for the control and execution of the scheme. Co-ordination in this field is essential and to achieve such co-ordination a new form of staff organisation is called for.

The Central Training Committee,<sup>(1)</sup> as the new organisation might be called, would need to be a small and businesslike body, the members of which, while representing certain interests (including the Treasury and the Whitley Staff Side), would be chosen primarily for their specialised knowledge. The chairman might suitably be an educationalist from outside the Service, remunerated on a part-time or retaining fee basis. There should be a whole-time secretary and a small clerical staff, all active civil servants and all seconded for varying periods from their departments. A special allowance might be granted during the period of attachment.

The Central Training Committee would have two main duties:

- (1) To act as a clearing house of training ideas for the whole Service, to examine existing schemes, record experience and furnish advice on new proposals.
- (2) To supervise the examinations set up to test knowledge and experience of the 'Basic Clerical' type and to issue certificates to successful competitors. As a consequence of this function it might be found desirable for the committee to arrange courses of study to fit the syllabuses of their examinations.

The aim of the examination would be to test that the junior officer had fitted himself for the efficient performance of a clerk's duties. It has been suggested above that four subjects such as office practice and organisation, simple bookkeeping, elements of statistics, and outlines of central government would be appropriate. A second stage examination might be added to include not too advanced papers in economics, public finance, political organisation, social psychology, and similar subjects, to act as a suitable groundwork for more serious studies in the general sphere

<sup>(1)</sup> The recent proposal to introduce a Staff College (see p. 182) would have some bearing on this development, but unless the scope of such an organisation were much wider than current suggestions appear to indicate, the Central Training Committee would still be needed.

of public administration. This is as far as one ought to look at the outset. All junior officers would be advised to study for these certificates and the holding of the first certificate would, in the case of the clerical grade, be made a necessary preliminary to the passing of the efficiency barrier.

Departmental training would remain within the hands of the separate departments, which must remain the final judges of their own requirements. The responsibility for carrying out the departmental training would rest in the hands of a training officer, who would have executive authority. These training officers would consult the Central Training Committee whenever necessary and also get into touch with each other, both formally and informally, thus constituting a general liaison throughout the Service.

Sufficient details have already been given to convey to the reader some of the chief difficulties of the promotions problem, and it would be out of place further to develop this vital theme here. Since, however, the efficient working of the systems both of training and promotion in actual operation must depend largely upon the flexibility of the general staff organisation, especially in its faculty of making the greatest possible use of its available human abilities, it is proposed in the following chapters to outline the type of organisation that appears to be needed in order to counteract the strong tendencies towards departmentalism inherent in the present system and to build up a new administrative machine capable of meeting the complicated needs of the new community.

Before we embark, however, upon this difficult enterprise, it will be advisable to glance back and to recapitulate the various points beyond which a more efficient system would be called upon to advance.

#### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFICIENT SERVICE

There are four requirements that the modern Civil Service organisation needs to fulfil:

- (1) It must be capable of meeting the functional aims for which it has been brought into being.
- (2) It must be synchronised at the recruitment stage with the school leaving ages as prescribed by the different strata of the educational system.

- (3) It must be able to meet the long-term changes postulated both by the alterations in the social environment and by the general development of administrative technique.
- (4) It must, while conforming to a centralised plan, be capable of meeting the various special demands of the separate departmental units.

The first two requirements are intimately connected and depend upon the type of agent it is desired to recruit. Where definite professional, technical or manipulative abilities are needed the problem is greatly simplified, but in the administrative-clerical sphere the solution is far from being obvious. The qualities required for this type of work are still but vaguely understood and, since the safest assumption is that the educated person will usually be best able to grapple with the sort of task that the work of administration imposes, it is almost universally the practice to make the educational standard of the recruit the determining factor. Thus in most civil services the staffs are organised into higher and lower classes according to the type of education which the new entrant has received. In Britain this has meant the division of the administrative-clerical sphere into three groups—administrative, executive, and clerical—recruited from the university, higher secondary, and intermediate secondary school stages respectively, with a subsidiary clerical class (the clerical assistants) coming from the elementary stage in theory but from the secondary stage in fact. These three main classes do not form one administrative hierarchy, for each has its own higher posts and avenues of advancement. The dangers of this logical arrangement are manifest.

In the first place it emphasises and perpetuates a division into social classes on a basis of educational differentiation; in the second, in so far as it is effective, it places an unnecessary restriction upon the interplay of competitive forces within a field from which they have, largely on account of the absence of the profit motive, already been partially eliminated. The difficulty of determining the appropriate division of labour in this field and of administrative attainment (which clearly depends upon something besides education) reinforces the need for a system which gives the maximum opportunity to the choice of ability. While, therefore, it is necessary to ensure that the Civil Service organisation at the recruitment stage is so arranged that the State is

able to draw upon the abilities offered by all stages of the educational system—so far, that is to say, as such abilities are deemed essential to the performance of its functions—it is equally important that that organisation should not unnecessarily perpetuate the division of the staffs into educational castes.

The adoption of open competition as the general principle of recruitment to the administrative-clerical sphere ensures the selection of groups of persons from each educational grade which constitute reasonable samples of the types required (not the best in each case, as is often claimed, but including a fair proportion of the best). To meet, however, the first requirement postulated above, viz. that the personnel of the Civil Service should be able to carry out the functions with which the Service is entrusted, a general scheme of training is necessary. Such a scheme has already been outlined above and it is not proposed, therefore, to touch further upon this matter here.

The last two requirements of our ideal Civil Service, which we may summarise under the general virtue of flexibility both in regard to time and place, are a matter not of recruitment but of general organisation. We have discovered that, however well a service may be organised, its structure tends to get out of adjustment very rapidly, partly owing to the development of administrative technique and the definite addition of new tasks, due to the expansion of the social state, and partly owing to the gradual development of knowledge as reflected by the general educational system which makes available greater stores of talent for recruitment to the service. In truth the Civil Service organisation tends very shortly after its introduction to act as a strait-jacket and the controlling authority is forced to look round for means of altering it, so that it shall be capable of meeting the new demands by which it is confronted. New classes are introduced to carry out, at lower salary rates, the increasing volume of machine and routine work, while overlapping grades are proposed to smooth out the disturbed relationships between the different grades of the same class. Eventually an impartial inquiry into the adequacy, or otherwise, of the general organisation will be necessitated. From the outset, too, the special requirements of different departments will have to be provided for and the powerful influences of departmentalism may even nullify the general scheme. It is clear, of course, that unless the scheme of staff organisation is capable of being modified to provide for such differences it will

not be suitable for application to a service which seeks to meet the diverse needs of the modern State.

#### THE NEED FOR GREATER FLEXIBILITY

There is another evil of departmentalism which touches the fluidity of the staff as between the different units. Although in practice the staffs are recruited through the same channels, as soon as individuals are appointed to the different departments they tend to become permanently attached thereto. Changes thereafter, either by way of transfer in order to ensure the greatest advantage from special talents both to the State and to the official and to remove the square pegs from the round holes, or by way of promotion outside the normal line, which leads only within the single department, are in the normal course exceptional,<sup>(1)</sup> and when they do occur are subject to chance rather than to design. The varying tempo of change within the different departments inevitably leads to a gross inequality of opportunity to officers entering under the same conditions and raises administrative problems of the first magnitude within those offices where the vagaries of development have led to a grave dislocation in the age-groupings of the staff. It is possible under such influences for a department to lose the larger part of its experienced staff within a short period of years (as the outcome of a rapid expansion some years earlier) and this has the accompanying evil that the staff recruited later will have to wait long for the opportunity of advancement and will have to pack its experience on the higher duties into a much shorter period of time, with consequent loss to the general standard of efficiency.

It is essential that the service organisation should be so designed as to give the fullest scope to personal initiative. It is very undesirable that the individual recruited to the Service in general should be henceforth restricted to a department in particular and should be deprived of any real chance of placing his abilities elsewhere within the Service. In this respect the Civil Service is at a considerable disadvantage as compared with the outside world, where a greater fluidity ensures the more efficient grading of the abilities available. It is true that to the individual outside this possibility of being able to take his wares elsewhere is fraught with the grave disadvantage that he may find himself not wanted anywhere, but the restriction of scope for change within the

<sup>(1)</sup> This situation is greatly modified in wartime.

Service is not fundamental to its principles of organisation and the gain in general efficiency which would follow a widening of the field of intra-Service competition is one that the community cannot afford to lose. In working out the design for our new organisation the urgency for this element of greater fluidity will need to be borne in mind.

Two other points should also be remembered. The first is that the new organisation should be flexible enough to take into the governmental sphere new institutions hitherto outside the State's orbit. On the fringes between the spheres of State enterprise and public corporational control the boundary line is indefinite and blurred: the staff organisation of the Civil Service must be capable of advancing its territory into new areas without undue internal strain. The second point is that the principles of objectivity in staff selection, both at the recruitment and promotional stages, must continue to be rigorously applied. The ideal of public service must not be tempered by the spirit of favouritism.

Bearing these general requirements in mind we now address ourselves to the task of construction.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE PROPOSED SCHEME—I

AT THE outset a compromise in principle must be admitted. It has been maintained that the administrative-clerical service ought to be free from class barriers. But although every consideration will be given to this important requirement in the working out of the proposed organisation, it would be quite impracticable, at the present stage of development of our educational system, to construct an efficient one-class Service. The need for taking a proportion of the best from the universities into the Service postulates a separate administrative class at the top. This class would be recruited on the basis of 50 per cent. direct from the universities, by means of an open competitive examination designed to obtain only graduates of the highest honours standard, and the remaining 50 per cent. from within the Service. Apart from this, all the administrative-clerical work would be performed by one class which would cover the range of duties at present allocated to junior executive officers, higher clerical officers, clerical officers, clerical assistants, and the departmental and other classes of a similar type. Diagram No. III on page 139 shows the proposed constitution of this General Clerical Class. There would, however, be special staff posts above the general class, as at present.

#### GROUP SENIORITY: A NEW PRINCIPLE

The proposed class would be divided into ten groups; from one point of view known as 'seniority' groups, from another as 'salary' groups. These groups would not constitute grades in the normal sense, although they would certainly have some of the characteristics of grades. A new principle is involved here: the principle of group seniority. In the new Service, the individual would no longer retain a personal seniority based upon length of service, but would take his seniority from his group. The members of the same group would have the same seniority and within each department would be arranged on the group list in alphabetical order.



Throughout the Service members of the same group would be considered as having the same seniority and as being entitled therefore to precisely the same rights in regard to transfers, promotions and special selection for posts needing special qualifications.

Recruitment from outside would be made to the three bottom groups, the examination being cast on the present lines to obtain candidates from the primary plus stage for group I, from the intermediate secondary stage for group II, and from the higher secondary stage for group III. The whole of group I would, of course, be recruited from outside, possibly from girls only, as in the present case of the clerical assistants: 33½ per cent. of group II would come from group I, and 66½ per cent. from outside; 90 per cent. of group III would come from group II and 10 per cent. from outside. The appropriate percentage would be determined by the controlling authority and would be alterable in the light of the general needs of the administration. Should the present rate of marriage turnover continue, the percentage proposed here would ensure that there was no restriction of opportunity of advancement between the lower groups. If boys were admitted to group I, the marriage turnover would be considerably diminished and it would be necessary to revise the inflow percentages. In view, however, of the proved suitability of women for the ordinary routine duties and the inestimable advantage to the administration of a high turnover of the subordinate staffs, it will be assumed here that the present policy is continued.

Officers belonging to the three groups would not be considered as members of different classes. They would work side by side, be known by the same grade title, and enjoy the same privileges. Annual leave, for example, would not be arranged according to group seniority but would be assigned to members of all the three groups either according to age, by means of a rota, or by some such method agreed by the staffs of the office concerned. This would clearly be a matter for local arrangement subject to the provision that the scheme adopted did not break away from the general condition of group equality.

Entrants from the group II and group III examinations would receive the initial advantages of a higher starting salary and a higher group seniority. These advantages would surely be sufficient to attract the right types into the Service and to compensate for the additional time spent at school. But here their advantages would end, except in so far as their better education

really increased their fitness for advancement and so gave them a lead over their colleagues. Once the new officer had been assimilated to his appropriate group he would receive precisely the same treatment as every other member of the group and no distinguishing mark as to origin would be recorded on the staff lists. There are numerous precedents for this equality of treatment of candidates from different educational sources: banking and insurance companies usually adopt this principle. All start at the bottom, although, indeed, the great advantage of the better educated is bound in most cases to bring more rapid advancement. It is only just, however, that every officer should prove his worth in direct competition with his colleagues and that those who cannot do this successfully should remain where they will not be able to prevent someone else from performing the higher duties more efficiently.

#### GROUP ORGANISATION

Each of the ten seniority groups of our proposed General Clerical Class would cover a salary step of £60, which would be obtainable by four annual increments of £15, granted more or less as a matter of course, as at present, on the certificate of a supervising officer. These increments may not seem very generous but, as will appear later, additional increments of £30 or £45 would not be uncommon, especially in the lower groups. The total salary range, commencing at £125 and ending at £725, is based upon present scales of the classes concerned and does not pretend to be more than a suggestion of the rates of remuneration appropriate to the new class. The maximum of £725 is, it is true, somewhat higher than the present maxima of the junior executive and the higher clerical grades, but this would be offset by the fact that some officers who now go forward to the present maximum would, under the proposed arrangement, stop somewhere short of that amount. The correct market rates would, in the long run, be determined by the controlling authority in accordance with normal practice.

The existence of ten staff groups, where three or four at present serve, immediately suggests two very difficult problems of organisation: (1) how shall the relative numbers of the ten groups be determined? and (2) how shall the various officers be allocated to so many different grades of work?

At this stage it is necessary to refer to a new controlling authority which the proposed system would need—the Personnel Organisation Board. It would be the duty of this Board to decide the relative numbers of the different groups, bearing in mind both the central and the local needs of the administration. It would also have other important duties (to be mentioned later). The proposed Board might well consist of five members—viz. an expert chairman and one representative each of the Establishments Department of the Treasury, the Civil Service Commission, the Staff Side of the National Whitley Council, and the Ministry particularly concerned with the question under review. The Board would need a small permanent staff. Only the chairman would be a whole-time member: he would be chosen from the business or academic world for his special knowledge and experience of personnel problems. The four other members would be selected, according to circumstances, by the organisations concerned, except that the departmental member would be co-opted specifically to deal with the matter under review. When a general rather than a departmental matter was being considered the place of this member would be taken by a person of competence, selected, by the three representative members of the Board. All the Board would, in the nature of things, be experts on staff and organisational problems. To assist them in the efficient performance of their duties the Board would be authorised (a) to call upon officers of the departments to give evidence; (b) to examine by personal investigation the actual conditions on the spot; and (c) to appoint investigators to examine and report upon matters under review.

One of the chief tasks of the Personnel Organisation Board would be to determine the number of officers of each of the ten groups which would be appropriate for the needs of the separate departments. In diagram No. III it has been assumed that the department concerned has a total clerical staff of 675 (consisting of 110 junior executive officers and higher clerical officers, 415 clerical officers, and 150 clerical assistants) and the way in which the total would be divided between the ten groups is shown. If this department were taken to represent the typical department in regard to staff organisation, then the distribution proposed would represent something like the normal distribution for the whole Service. The Board would work out such an ideal or theoretical distribution and use it as a standard against which the

particular departmental schemes of grading would be compared. An initial scheme of grading would be prepared by the department itself with the assistance of the local Whitley machinery and would be submitted to the Board for criticism. The Board would compare the proposed scheme with the standard and investigate the reasons for the deviations, doing all in their power to reach an equitable balance between the departments, taking into account their different functions. Experience of the various types of work and departmental tasks would be acquired as time went on, and no doubt the grading would very soon be carried out with a surprising degree of accuracy.

At the present time it is probable that there are wide variations between the duties of the same general service grade in the different departments, variations due to differences in tradition, organisation and policy. Such differences are difficult to prove, since there is no adequate machinery for making the actual comparisons, but obviously the very lack of such co-ordinating machinery indicates that a uniformity of practice is not likely to have been achieved. The strength of departmentalism will further ensure that variations in practice shall arise. Each department will seek to magnify the importance of its own functions. Only in the case of an organisation of the type of the Post Office can commercial tests be applied. It is suggested here that both for this reason and on account of its size and importance the Personnel Organisation Board should take the Post Office as the general standard with which the other departments should be compared.

The Board would make its final recommendations to the Establishments Department of the Treasury, with whom the final decision would rest. When it became necessary to change a department's grading scheme the Board would in the same way attach its expert recommendations to the case submitted by the department to the Treasury.

#### CLASSIFICATION OF POSTS

Now, it is clear that many departments would find it necessary to deviate considerably from the ideal distribution. Some would need a larger proportion of routine workers and the lower groups would be proportionately increased; others would need a higher percentage of senior officers with consequent increases in the higher groups. Departments dealing with higher types of work (at

present graded as executive) might find that they did not need groups I and II; others, with more supervisory but less executive work, might find that they could get on without group X and, perhaps, group IX. In special cases the introduction of a higher group XI might be found expedient. It is one of the chief virtues of the proposed arrangement that it should have this flexibility, both in regard to the special needs of the different ministries and in relation to the long-term growth of the Service. One general rule in regard to the group proportions would have to be laid down, viz. that groups IV and V should together total more than groups II and III. This would ensure that all junior officers would be certain of advancing to a reasonable salary level, provided they were efficient.

The allocation of the various officers to the different grades of work would be largely a matter for the separate departments to decide, although the expert services of the Personnel Organisation Board would be of considerable value in ensuring that approximately similar standards were adopted throughout the Service. Broadly, the ten groups would cover three types of clerical work, viz. groups I, II and III routine clerical work; groups IV, V and VI good clerical work; and groups VII, VIII, IX and X executive and supervisory clerical work. These labels are merely descriptive of the work: they would not be included in the official title of the officer, who would be known as a clerical officer (group No. —). The work of the department would be divided up into three types, but beyond this there would be no attempt to earmark each post according to group. The group ranking would attach to the officer and not to the post. The distribution of the officers within each of the main categories would be achieved by allocating the better jobs to the officers with higher group seniority. Naturally circumstances would change from time to time the relative values of the different jobs and there would be no objection, for example, if an officer in group VI were transferred to a job hitherto carried out by a group V man, or vice versa. Not the work performed, but the way in which it was performed, would be the determining factor within each of the categories. It must not be overlooked, in this connection, that a first-rate officer may often so organise his duties that his successor will find it possible to continue to run them at the old standard of efficiency, although he himself may be inferior in many ways to the previous occupant of the seat.

## DEPARTMENTAL PROMOTIONS

The question of promotion between the different groups of the General Clerical Class would be a matter entirely for the department, and the present system of annual reports, promotion boards and staff co-operation through the Whitley Council would be employed to the full. Advancement would take place from one seniority group to the next above. A vacancy in one group would create a vacancy in each lower group (except in so far as vacancies in groups II and III were allocated to open competition entrants). The staff numbers having been approved, the department would have no power to hold up the filling of vacancies arising as a consequence of normal staff movements. Each member of the same seniority group within the department would have an equal right to be considered for a vacancy in the next group above (provided he had completed the prescribed probationary period within the group). Under no circumstances would an officer be allowed to jump over a group. Indeed, in view of the high degree of staff fluidity which the system would ensure, there could be no adequate reason for such a procedure.

An officer being advanced from one seniority group to the next would usually be transferred to a different section of the department and would serve one year's probation under a different supervising officer, before his promotion was confirmed (except in the case of advancements from group III to group IV and from group VI to group VII, in which instances a similar procedure would be adopted but a two years' probation period would be stipulated). If the general training scheme had been introduced, it might further be laid down that the officer leaving the highest routine group should hold the Basic Clerical Certificate and have passed successfully through the departmental training course.

Advancement would bring an immediate salary increase to the minimum of the new group scale (which thus in the case of an officer who had only recently completed his year's probation in the previous group would amount to an additional increment of £37 10s.). An officer receiving the maximum of his present group would receive one normal increment on his new group scale. The officer entering a new seniority group would have his name placed immediately upon the new staff list in the proper alphabetical order, but, for the guidance of the promotion board, a date would be placed after his name indicating when he would be due to complete his probationary period. The annotation would be

removed from the lists printed after the probationary period had been satisfactorily completed.

A reference to the diagram will show that by this system of increments an exceptionally brilliant and fortunate officer might reach the maximum of the whole scale by the time he was 32. Such rapid progress would, in the nature of things, be as unusual as the existence of such excellence would be exceptional, and when it did occur it would be but a prelude to early advancement into higher spheres. Under normal circumstances it would clearly be of greater administrative advantage if the officer did not reach his maximum at too early an age. Usually even the brilliant man would take longer, since it would be unlikely that vacancies would continue to occur in each group at precisely the most favourable moment for him. But the delay owing to this cause should never be more than a matter of months, since the proposed scheme visualises the constant occurrence of vacancies throughout the whole system.

Normally a good officer, taking each salary step in due course but receiving no check at the top of the different scales, would reach the maximum at 55, if he entered by group I; at 53, if he entered by group II; and at 51, if he entered by group III. Naturally many would do better than this and some not so well. Officers would not pass groups IV or V if they were not fit to do so. On the other hand the caption 'too old at  $x$  years' would no longer have any validity. Advancement might come at any time; an officer's age, except in so far as it denoted experience, would not enter into the matter at all.

#### DEMOTION: A POSSIBILITY

A second new principle—new, that is to say, to the British Civil Service—would be introduced, viz. the principle of demotion. It would be possible for an officer to be reduced to the next group below for reasons of incompetence. An unsatisfactory marking, subject to confirmatory service under a different supervising officer, would make a regressive step of this sort inevitable. Officers demoted in this way would receive a salary reduction sufficient to place them upon the maximum rate of their new group. An officer would be advanced from the lower group to take the place of the demoted officer. This process would render it possible to eject from the Service through the lowest groups any officers not considered to be of a suitable standard.

The principle is considered necessary in order to eliminate from the administrative sphere those 'passengers' who are, under the present staff organisation, placed in positions beyond their capacities or who, disgruntled by their personal disillusionments, have decided not to pull their full weight unless they are compelled to do so. It would be to the advantage of all to maintain at least their position in their present group, and tendencies to slackness would have been given a mortal blow. The dangers of victimisation would be negligible in view of the great degree of staff fluidity implicit in the new organisation (and the consequent practice of placing officers adversely reported upon under different supervising officers), together with the existence of a comprehensive scheme of reports and the functioning of the Whitley system. In the long run the practice of demoting an officer would be exceptional, since the system itself would reduce the probability of an officer proceeding very far beyond his proper position. Each officer would have too many real obstacles to negotiate to make it likely that favouritism would have any considerable influence.

In regard to both promotion and demotion, all officers would be entitled to equal treatment. By whichever of the three entrance examinations the officer came into the Service, he would be placed upon an equal footing with those members of his group who had entered by either of the other examinations. There is little doubt that the higher starting pay and the general form of the examination would ensure the entrance of persons of the right calibre with higher secondary school education. For, although the entrant to group III would not be entirely free from the danger of demotion to group II if it proved that the clerical work of the Civil Service was not his vocation, yet in the main the people with the more advanced education would have a great advantage in their early years. Moreover, the provision of avenues of promotion to the highest posts (to be touched upon in the next section) would aid in making the General Clerical Class an attractive field.

#### SELECTION FOR ADVANCEMENT

In the application of the annual report system to officers in the different groups it would be necessary to bear in mind the relative importance of the seniority groups. The application of similar standards to the whole class would be neither desirable nor,



indeed, practicable. On the other hand the supervising officer, faced by the problem of orienting his judgment to the ten different group standards, could not be blamed for giving up the task in despair. The solution could be found in the application of three different average standards, in accordance with the three main divisions of the class and in making the reports in five different grades, viz. *A.*, exceptionally fitted for early advancement; *B.*, fitted for early advancement; *C.*, fitted for advancement; *D.*, not yet fitted for advancement; and *E.*, below standard of group. Officers for advancement would be chosen from the highest marking in the group. If the gradings were properly assigned, the *A.* men would be in greater evidence in the highest group of each section. For example, taking the middle ranges of the work, we should expect to find the chief marking in group VI, *A.*; the chief marking in group V, *B.*; and the chief marking in group IV, *C.* But there could be no strict uniformity, since the *A.* men of group VI would be continually percolating into group VII, while first-class officers would be coming up from group III. The very fluidity of the proposed organisation would lead to certain anomalies. Thus there would certainly be a number of *C.* and *D.* men in groups V and VI at the same time as there were certain *A.* and *B.* men in groups III and IV. This would not mean that the officers with the higher markings would substitute the officers with the lower markings, since the latter would have been adjudged as satisfactory, but that the former were 'on the march'. If the scheme worked properly the more highly marked officers would not have long to wait to reach their correct relative levels.

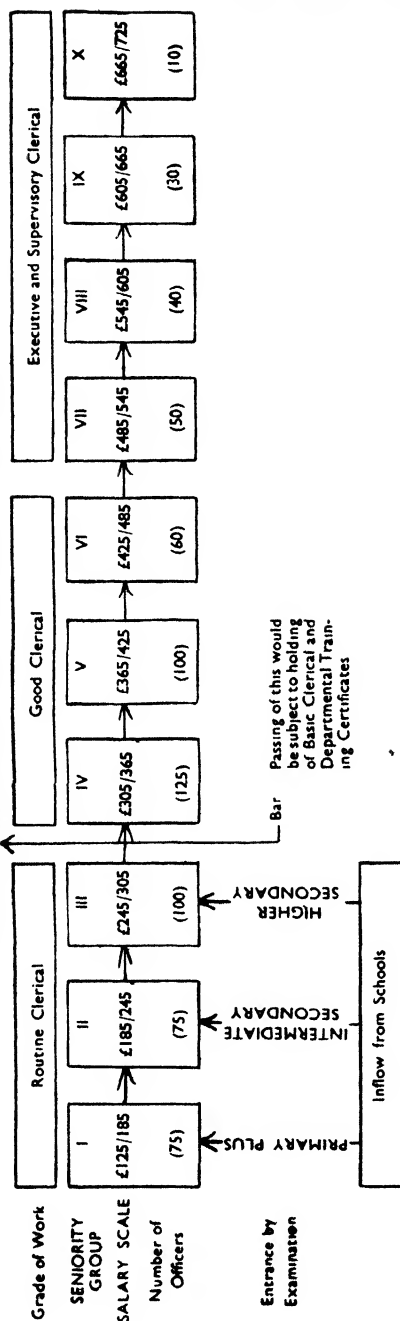
#### SEX EQUALITY

There is one more point to be considered here: the question of sex equality. It is assumed that, subject to the proviso that the group I competition was reserved to women, there would be equal opportunities to either sex for entry to and advancement in the clerical class generally. The question of salary differentiation would not be easy to settle. In accordance with the principle of supply and demand, already adumbrated above, it would be practicable to scale down each salary group on a proportional basis. In the long run, however, it might be advisable to concede equal pay to both sexes, in anticipation that the relatively more favourable inducements thus offered to the women at the entrance stage would be adequately offset by the greater efficiency

of the men over a long period of years. Under the new system the men's interests would certainly have one safeguard which does not exist at present. The group system would ensure that women did not rise far above the position to which their true capacities entitled them. The early influences of favouritism (ever-prevalent where members of both sexes work side by side) would be offset at a later stage, when the declining power of youth and beauty permitted a just assessment of the female officer's true official capabilities to be made. In order to retain the fluidity desirable in the routine groups the marriage bar would be maintained. Changes might be made later when enough data had been made available for the impact upon the Service of equal pay conditions to be assessed.

The implications of the proposed scheme in relation to the General Clerical Class in the different departments and in relation to the Service outside the clerical class will now be considered.

DIAGRAM No III  
SHOWING ORGANIZATION OF PROPOSED GENERAL CLERICAL CLASS



It has been assumed that the department to which this scheme has been applied had a total of 675 officers, consisting of:  
110 Junior Executive and Higher Clerical Officers. 415 Clerical Officers. 150 Clerical Assistants.

but the numbers actually allocated would vary according to the needs of the particular department.

There would be a general rule that the total of Groups IV and V should be greater than the total of Groups II and III.

Except in the case of the three lower groups a vacancy in one group would automatically create a vacancy in each lower group. Promotions would follow as a matter of course.

The salary scales would progress by annual steps of £15. (These amounts and the group salary scales are quoted merely to demonstrate the principle and the amounts actually fixed would, of course, be appropriate to existing conditions.)

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE PROPOSED SCHEME—II

IT is implicit in the principle of group seniority that all members of the same group throughout the Service should be interchangeable. This provision would be necessary to remove the grave inequalities which inevitably arise when officers are confined to one department throughout their careers. In order to avoid, however, in substitution for the evils of too little fluidity, the equally serious disadvantages of too much, it would be necessary to regulate and to control the conditions under which transfers from one department to another could be made. The controlling authority would be the Personnel Organisation Board.

#### THE PERSONNEL ORGANISATION BOARD AND STAFF TRANSFERS

All transfers would first have to be authorised by the Board. Transfers would be of two types, viz. compulsory or voluntary, subject generally to the same conditions, except that officers being transferred under voluntary conditions would have to serve two years in their new department before they became eligible for promotion.

Compulsory transfers would fall into three categories:

(i) The transfer of individual officers in accordance with the needs of the Service, at the request of the Treasury or of the separate departments. For example, where a department, owing to new additions to its functions, found that it required a certain type of experience not adequately existing among its present staff, e.g. in accounting, costing, or any specialised clerical work where it was not considered necessary to set up special staff posts, a request would be forwarded to the Board, which would circularise the other departments for applicants possessing the required experience. Under this rule, too, departments with diminishing functions would report to the Board the names of any officers whose services could be relinquished. In order to avoid discrimination, in this case, the department would have to submit the whole group list to the Board for them to choose from; the department

itself merely retaining the right to challenge any selection where adequate reasons could be advanced.

(ii) The transfer of officers to build up new administrative units, e.g. as in the instance of the Unemployment Assistance Board.<sup>(1)</sup> The Personnel Organisation Board would determine the approximate group distribution in accordance with:

- (a) the general Service grouping; and
- (b) the special requirements of the new department so far as they were determinable.

Further details as to how the vacancies thus created would be filled are given below.

(iii) Transfers at the request of a department or a section of the staff (through the Whitley Council) would be authorised where the age groupings of the department's staff were considered likely to lead to undue stagnancy. Statistics would be collected from all staff units and an age-plus-service formula would be worked out for each seniority group. Wherever it was discovered that the actual distribution in the department deviated to an unreasonable degree from the average the Board would carry out exchanges of staff within the same seniority group but between departments which were above and below the standard in such a way that a more equitable distribution was achieved. The exchanges would be chosen first from among volunteers and, failing such, from among names selected by the departments concerned. Officers compulsorily selected would have no option in the matter (since under the proposed scheme all officers would be considered as belonging to the Service rather than to any particular department), but in making their final selection the Board would take into account the officers' convenience (e.g. in regard to home address) and the officer himself would be compensated for any financial loss incurred through the transfer.

Voluntary transfers would fall into two categories:

(i) Ordinary exchanges between two officers of the same group. Such exchanges would be subject to mutual arrangement between the officers concerned and, providing the departments approved, the Board's authorisation would be little more than a matter of form.

(ii) Special transfers at the request of an officer able to make a reasonable case for such transfer; e.g. he might urge the lack, in his present department, of opportunity to use any special

<sup>(1)</sup> This machinery is proposed for normal peacetime practice and reference is not therefore made to the new wartime Ministries.

capabilities, or there might be urgent private reasons for a change. The Board would treat each case on its merits. Lists of such applicants would be compiled in order that transfers might be carried out with the minimum of friction. It would often be possible to fit transfers of this type in with the general requirements arising under the rules for compulsory transfers. In such cases the officers transferred would be granted the advantages of a compulsory transfer. Under this heading it would be possible to consider the cases of officers who, for some reason or other, felt that they were unjustly treated. A suspicion that victimisation exists need not be based upon incontrovertible evidence to have evil repercussions on an officer's efficiency and output. In such cases the officer would apply direct to the Board which would, however, before investigating the case, request the department to make an ordinary report upon the officer's conduct and efficiency. The officer making representations would be entitled to appear in person before the Board, or their agent, and the conversation at such an interview would be regarded as strictly confidential. Where a reasonable case had been made, the officer would be granted a transfer in the normal course. Irresponsible appeals would be discouraged, but usually an officer would hesitate to invite failure, since the needless advertisement of his dissatisfaction could serve no useful purpose.

The transfers authorised by the Board would often consist of exchanges, an officer moving in either direction, and vacancies would not arise. Sometimes, however (e.g. when new ministries were being formed or in the case of redundancy of staff), a single-way transfer would be necessitated. Where officers were exchanged no grading problem would arise. Each officer would take the place of the other, going into the same seniority group and taking his chances with the rest of the group in due course. Between the different groups of the General Clerical Class promotion transfers would not take place. This would largely remove the unfairness of the transfer system and clear away the antagonism of the staffs which exists under the system at present in operation. The one-way transfer would present rather a different problem.

#### PROCEDURE IN NEW MINISTRIES

When a new organisation was being built up the higher ranks, administrative and staff posts, would be chosen first, a reasonable

percentage of assigned posts being reserved at the outset. In selecting these higher officers the Personnel Organisation Board would choose from the whole Service, taking into account both the need of the new unit for special experience and the incidence of higher promotions in the separate departments. The vacancies thus created within the departments (*viz.* by the transfer of the higher officers to the new organisation), including the consequent vacancies in the different clerical groups, would then be filled in the normal course.

The Board would now review the Service as a whole and assign the clerical class posts in the new organisation (to the number of each group required) to the departments more or less in proportion to their total staffs, giving preference to any offices where an unreasonable deviation from the standard had arisen. The posts thus assigned would be temporarily regarded as additional to the departments' normal establishments. After the departmental authorities had filled these created vacancies in the usual way, the Board would transfer an equivalent number to the new organisation, thus restoring the original numbers in each department. It would not take the men recently advanced, but would select from the particular group list in general. Thus the officers transferred would not lose their normal opportunity for advancement (which they certainly might claim had occurred if they had been selected and transferred before the filling of the vacancies within the department). The inconvenience of transfer would be offset by the reservation of a reasonable percentage of the higher vacancies in the new department (already referred to). These earmarked posts would be filled from within the new organisation (by the normal departmental procedure), the promotions being held on an acting basis pending confirmation at the end of a reasonable period. Officers failing in this special probation would have the option of transferring elsewhere, and the Board would arrange the necessary exchanges; another officer within the new department being given the acting post.

In the case where redundant staff was transferred, vacancies would be found in those departments where expansion was taking place. In any department authority for an increase in staff numbers would first be obtained from the Treasury, as at present, the increase being allocated to the appropriate group under the guidance of the Personnel Organisation Board. The decision whether such new posts should be filled from within the depart-

ment in the ordinary course or from elsewhere would rest with the Board, which would take into account all the relevant data and do everything in their power to ensure that a just decision was reached. The staff side of the departmental Whitley Council would be permitted to make representations to the Board.

### THE HIGHER RANKS

As we have already mentioned, above the General Clerical Class (which would constitute numerically by far the major portion of the administrative-clerical section of the Service) there would be two general ranges of posts, viz. the administrative and the staff-officerships.

The administrative class would constitute a Service class, an élite from which the highest administrative positions would be filled. In view of the proposed increase in its recruitment from within the Service to 50 per cent., the new administrative class would be somewhat expanded to include many of the higher controlling posts at present graded as executive or super-clerical.

Selection for the vacancies assigned to the Service would be carried out through three channels, the proportions falling to each depending entirely upon the abilities and experience actually existing in the three different spheres:

(i) A reasonable number would be assigned to the staff officer grades, especially where it was deemed desirable to fill administrative posts by the advancement of officers of mature experience within their own department. Such promotees would not go into the basic administrative grade, but would enter the new class at a higher point, in accordance with the importance of their new posts. It is through this channel that advancement to those members of the specialised, professional, and technical classes, who displayed special administrative abilities, would be afforded.

(ii) A number of administrative posts would be allocated to clerical officers in groups V, VI, VII and VIII. Such officers would be selected by the head of the department, with the concurrence of the departmental Whitley Council. The officers selected would appear before a board set up specially for the purpose by the Civil Service Commission. There would be no age limits but the selection board would naturally, other things being equal, give preference to the more youthful candidates. Successful officers would be assigned to the cadet grade of the administrative class and would be appointed on a strictly acting



basis. During the intensive probationary period every possible attempt would be made to ascertain that the new officer undoubtedly had the special qualities for which the successful administrative officer must be particularly distinguished.

(iii) Vacancies in the cadet grade would be earmarked for selection from among members of the General Clerical Class who were under 35 years old (irrespective of the group to which they belonged). Selection in this case would be carried out by means of a competitive examination of a specialised type (comprising economics, political science and administrative theory) limited to candidates who—

- (a) had qualified in the prescribed general and departmental training courses; and
- (b) held, as a minimum qualification, the Diploma of Public Administration at London University (or a certificate of an equivalent type and standard, as listed and approved by the Civil Service Commission). The number of posts assigned to such examinations would necessarily be limited by the number and quality of the candidates.

The three avenues of advancement to the administrative class would ensure that all officers had a chance of scaling the heights, provided they had the right capabilities, and the methods of selection would at least go far to eliminate the baneful effects of favouritism.

Between the administrative class and the general clerical class there would be the various staff officer posts (comprising the present super-clerical and higher executive posts, except those transferred to the new administrative class). They would be recruited entirely by promotion from the general clerical class; for this purpose groups IX and X being combined and the selection being made from either indiscriminately. The reason for bringing group IX into the picture here is explainable thus. At the top of any class there are bound to be individuals, excellent in many ways, but for some reason or another not fit for promotion to more responsible posts. Thus group X might well become entirely occupied by officers of this type, excellent servants of the State with individual experience of great value to the organisation in which they worked. The advantages of the highest clerical group (and in practice a higher group XI might be found desirable) would constitute the just reward for their services and promotion to the staff grades would not normally

fall to them. Nevertheless the two groups would be arranged alphabetically for the purpose of promotion and the best man would be selected; the choice of a group IX man on one occasion would not preclude the best officer from being found in group X on a subsequent occasion.

The staff officer posts would be graded similarly throughout the Service, but owing to the need for special experience they would be largely reserved to the separate departments. Transfers would be possible where special considerations required them, but normally equality of opportunity would be reached through the greater fluidity of the General Clerical Class.

The real efficiency of the Service organisation would disclose itself in the choice of the most competent officers for the staff and administrative posts. In these ranges the present methods of assessment and selection, if employed with foresight and judgment, are quite capable of achieving their objective, for here the officer has ceased to be one of a large group and has taken on an individuality to which the officials at the top are in a better position to give their considered attention. If the basic structure and general plan of the Service are such that all are stimulated to give of their best and the most suitable are thrown up to the top, not by chance but by design, the general staff organisation will have proved its worth.

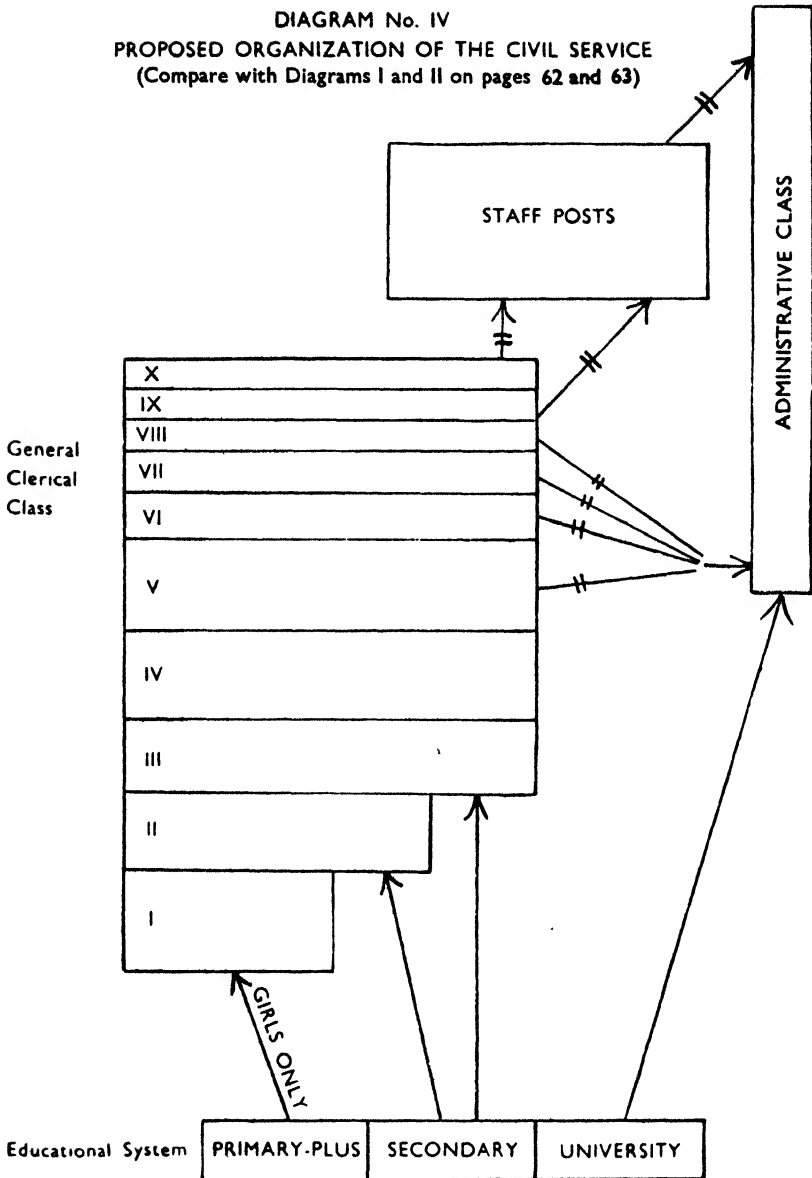
Diagram IV shows the proposed lay-out of the new Service organisation, including avenues of recruitment and promotion.

### OBJECTIONS

That the scheme of staff organisation outlined above would have to meet a number of serious objections is self-evident.

(1) In the first place it would no doubt be averred that the proposed division of the clerical sphere into ten separate staff groups would introduce an unmanageable complexity into the staff organisation. It should not be overlooked in this connection that this particular field is already divided between four or five different types of agent, viz. clerical assistants, clerical officers (in two separate sections where the efficiency bar is implemented or where the departmental type of grading exists), higher clerical officers and junior executive officers. In practice, too, those who to-day have the task of moving the staff to meet the needs of a department are in the habit of grouping it into efficiency categories for the specific purpose of assigning individuals to the type

DIAGRAM No. IV  
PROPOSED ORGANIZATION OF THE CIVIL SERVICE  
(Compare with Diagrams I and II on pages 62 and 63)



Recruitment avenues are shown by uncrossed arrows. Promotions by crossed arrows. There would also be a recruitment avenue between the General Clerical and the Administrative Class by means of a special examination.

of work which they will be most likely to do best (within the limits, of course, of the class and the locality). Every staff officer designates in his own mind key posts to which he will allocate, as far as he is able, those officers who are above the average of their grade. Incidentally, he will also recognise a certain number of positions in which he may safely place difficult officers where they will create the least trouble. In view of the wide range of duties which would be entrusted to the General Clerical Class, there should be no real difficulty in manipulating the ten staff groups, especially when it is remembered that contiguous groups would not necessarily deal with radically different categories of work, since the need for more efficient performance on the part of officers occupying certain seats would be taken into account.

In any case a charge of complexity ought not to be taken too seriously. Increasing complexity is a characteristic of our evolving civilisation and the real problem is to discover ways of ensuring that our more advanced stage of integration shall not give place, through human ineptitude, to a state of disintegration. Moreover, from the general Service point of view, the proposed organisation would be less complicated than any at present existing, since the particularising tendencies of the departmental scheme of organisation would be considerably modified by the adoption of the principle of group seniority and the legal uniqueness of each group throughout the Service.

(2) It might further be asserted that the greater fluidity of staff as between the different administrative units, claimed to be one of the greatest and most essential virtues of the proposed organisation, would not be without its negative side. The transfer of experienced officers from one department to another would inevitably be attended by a considerable loss of efficiency, owing to the sacrifice of experience useful in one place but practically useless in another. Indeed, the constant transfer of a number of officers might place some offices in considerable difficulties and slow down the execution of their work. But the evils attendant upon staff transfers must not be exaggerated. The tendency is rather to overrate the importance of experience for particular posts (a tendency which always receives vigorous endorsement from those who occupy the posts). In the clerical grades general experience is more useful than specialised experience, and if every effort is made to ensure that all necessary information is readily available (in accordance with the proposals in regard to the

training scheme in Part I, Chap. 5), there is no reason why an intelligent officer should not become efficient on his new job in a very short time. Under the proposed scheme, transfers would be made with the one objective of increasing the general efficiency, and the potential loss through the transfer of experienced officers would be set against the anticipated gain in other directions. No loss through the sacrifice of experience could, in the aggregate, outweigh the gain (i) from getting the square pegs out of the round holes; (ii) from ensuring that officers of ability should be able to employ their abilities in the service of the community; (iii) from substituting for the tendency of officials to vegetate the drive of personal enterprise and achievement; and (iv) from meeting more closely than is at present possible the functional needs of the administration. Nor must we exaggerate the actual degree of fluidity that would be necessitated. A Service which could be so carefully controlled would not tend so readily to get out of equilibrium, and during any reasonable period the number of transfers would not be great. Experienced officers would tend to stay where they were; indeed, the larger part of the staff of a department would not change. Transfers and exchanges would continue to be the exception rather than the rule and irresponsible applications would be discouraged. The mere existence of the opportunity to move would alone make a world of difference.

(3) A more serious objection to the system of group seniority would be that the consequent introduction of competition into the Service would induce a spirit of selfishness into a sphere that had gained greatly from its absence. It is not possible seriously to deny that the full play of the principle of competition, as enshrined in the doctrine of the survival of the fittest, leads to much human suffering and nurtures an atmosphere of fear and suspicion, yet at the other extreme there is the clear danger that the successful elimination of all competition between men would lead to a condition of stasis, which would, in the administrative sphere, be synonymous with death. One of the most difficult problems raised by the continuing expansion of the social state, now that the normal interplay of supply and demand is less and less effective in the labour market, is the discovery of new methods of ensuring the fullest possible contribution from personal effort. Moreover, it is not true that the selfish motives of competition are absent from the present Civil Service system, but rather that they are canalised into channels in which personal 'wire-pulling'

attains a remarkable degree of effectiveness, without accruing in the slightest degree to the public benefit. In adding to the number of obstacles, spread over a reasonably wide period of time, which the ambitious official would need to surmount, the new system would at least render the influences of favouritism less destructive of the general good. No longer would it be possible for one favoured step to take an inferior officer out of the rut and give him just the one necessary opportunity to rise in unmerited ascendancy above his more able fellows. The existence of the possibility of demotion would also tend to restrict the probability even of one unfair advantage being given. It is not considered, on the other hand, that the procedure of demotion would often need to be invoked, for it must not be forgotten that those officers, who under the present organisation clearly deserve to be demoted (if merely because they occupy positions which others ought to hold) would not have been likely to rise so far under a more effective system of staff organisation. Demotion would not be a frequent enough occurrence to warrant the assumption that its adoption would introduce an undesirable element of cut-throat competition into the Service. The existence of an efficient Whitley system would guard against any attempt at victimisation.

(4) This leads to another important objection from the staff's point of view, viz. the increased degree of salary differentiation postulated by the scheme. The small range of each salary scale (viz. £50) is designed with the ideal of fluidity in view. It is essential, if the process of demotion is ever to be practicable, that the consequent reduction in salary should not be out of proportion. The comparative lowness of the scales of the subordinate groups might act as a hardship to those officers who failed to obtain advancement within a reasonable period, but the scheme is so designed that only those officers who are unfit for better work should be so restrained and they would be encouraged (by means of a service gratuity, if necessary) to take their services to a more suitable market. Differentiation of reward, although it does not recommend itself to the majority who look upon economic equality as the only key to human felicity, is supported by practical experience. To ensure the utmost advantage to all from human effort some additional inducement must be offered to those capable of making the higher contribution. Otherwise the normal individual will choose alternative ends for the application of his energies. It is not unusual, in spheres where economic

differentiation does not rule, for other considerations to enter into the picture. For example, members of committees set up to serve their fellows do not find it difficult to convince themselves that they alone are the competent occupants of public office. And within the limitations of their particular field of experience it is difficult to deny that they are often right in their assumptions. The administrative machine cannot be made to work upon a basis of absolute equality. It has been suggested that all human organisations are subject to a tendency of averaging, or 'entropy',<sup>(1)</sup> by which the application of general rules and the imperceptible increase of costs tend gradually to reduce the general average of efficiency and so to inaugurate a phase of decline, which can only be arrested by a revolutionary re-organisation. The elimination of all vice leads to the eclipse of all virtue. The interplay of personality with personality becomes impossible in a sphere in which all men are equally able to take it easy. For few men have strong desires to do otherwise. If, then, we eliminate the inconsistencies of the present inchoate system (which indeed has one great virtue in that it impels the depressed to strive vigorously against repression) and inaugurate an era in which equality of opportunity has in some reasonable measure been achieved, we are compelled by reason to strengthen the alternative means by which the necessary encouragement to strive may be continually renewed. This is the chief argument for the maintenance of salary differentiation. But this is not to assert that the scales applied to the proposed scheme are appropriate. They are merely illustrative and based upon recent practice. The narrower range of salary rewards usual to the Civil Service is, as we have already suggested, more conducive to the general welfare than the wider range obtaining in the field of non-governmental enterprise. An equitable series of scales having been worked out, the general advancement of the remuneration rates of the Civil Service would necessarily depend upon the general increase in public wealth.

(5) Since the scheme is designed to deal with the field in which large blocks of staff are the rule and the need for generalised methods is paramount, it would certainly be true that its application to units where the staff was small would be fraught with many difficulties. It would not be easy, for example, to allocate to the ten seniority groups the staff of an office requiring the

(1) See Frank Pick, 'Some Reflections on the Administration of the Public Utility Undertaking', *Public Administration*, April, 1935.

services of, say, only seven clerical officers. Offices of this type, however, would be grouped into geographical divisions for the purposes of advancement, while transfers between the different geographical divisions would be controlled from the ministry's headquarters and made whenever such changes appeared to be desirable.

(6) At first sight it may well appear that the proposed re-organisation pays too much attention to the clerical class as a factor in the administrative-clerical sphere. This is precisely because it is in the management of the administrative rank and file, in the application of general rules to the staff and in the selection therefrom of individuals for special tasks and positions, that the chief problems of personnel organisation reside. It is implicit in the general theories of administration that the rules tending to increase the flexibility and efficiency of the staff system are applicable equally throughout the administrative hierarchy. But while it is not difficult to apply such principles to the higher ranges in which members of the staff remain individual persons dealing with clearly ascertainable functions, their application to a more generalised field raises many more problems, the solution of which must have important repercussions throughout the administrative organisation.

It is also true that the clerical sphere must in its lower divisions contain elements which would not fall within the General Clerical Class. The typists, for example, constitute a clerical-manipulative class whose duties, although auxiliary to the normal office routine, do not approximate very closely to those of the clerk. Thus the typists would continue to be separately organised, but reasonable avenues of advancement into the clerical class (possibly into group II) would be provided. Wherever possible, the General Clerical Class would take the place of the many departmental clerical classes at present in existence, even where the work was considered to be of a specialised nature, such specialised knowledge being taken into account by the Personnel Organisation Board when the question of transfers between the different departments was under consideration. The special conditions of such departmental classes as the tax inspectorate in the Inland Revenue and the Customs and Excise officerships might place them on a par with the professional-technical classes rather than within the main administrative-clerical group, but their close relationship with this group would render it essential that



sufficient bridges between the two should exist. Here the efficiency of the general training system would exert a weighty influence.

Any proposal for reform must be prepared to meet the criticism of those who are well informed upon the subject and the only right the reformer can claim is that the critic should have a better proposal to offer. For he is indeed fortunate, at this particular moment of history, in not being compelled to prove the need for reform and doubly fortunate in finding at a grave disadvantage all who have a vested interest in maintaining things as they are.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### LOOKING FORWARD

WRITING DURING the progress of a World War it is not difficult to grasp that a point of crisis in Western Civilisation has been reached but even before the outbreak of war in 1939 it had long been seen, at least by those who took any interest in affairs, that a situation of this sort was approaching, though whether it would be solved without breakdown or bloodshed was, until the last moment, a matter for definite cleavage of opinion. The world was moving steadily towards a more highly socialised system. Industrialism, the outcome of human invention, had gone hand in hand with socialisation, until the most advanced communities, e.g. Great Britain and Germany, despite their different political outlooks, were among the most socialised. The apparent exception of the United States was explained by the overwhelming prodigality of an undeveloped territory suddenly occupied by an advanced population; but under the impact of trade depression and financial crisis, the urgent need for closer social co-ordination was creating a tremendous activity in the direction of reform. Faced with the prospect of collapse the community that had exported its industrial techniques to the corners of the world was rapidly investigating those social institutions that it had so recently considered itself safe to despise.

No better example of the inevitability of this trend could be instanced than that of Britain itself, where a sturdy strain of individualism and a strongly entrenched conservatism, reflected even in the philosophies of the left-wing politicians, has hardly impeded the development of a highly integrated social system controlled by the central government through the agency of a closely organised Civil Service. The most vehement assertions of conservative statesmen, that the introduction of a certain institution must inevitably sap the precious foundations of individual enterprise, have time and time again been completely negated by the adoption, within a few years and by the same political combination, of the reforms they so recently opposed.

Then, too, we had the tremendous spectacle of the New Russia. A vast, predominantly agricultural community, collapsing under the insupportable burden of modern war, comes under the control of a party of enthusiasts whose minds are untrammelled by any of the ruling presuppositions of the Czarist leaders whom they displace. And if they adopt as the new State religion a creed that acts as little more than a camouflage to their main intentions, their recognition of the need to implement a practical programme and to scour the world for the most advanced industrial techniques to aid them in building the new society, further reinforces the inevitability of the process of socialisation. In applying the new principle to agriculture, the last basic occupation to resist the waves of social integration, they offered an example which similar movements elsewhere already promised to emulate.

#### DIAGNOSIS OF OUR AGE

Everywhere governments were acquiring new functions, and many new types of organisation were being evolved to deal with new situations. The need to fulfil a service was taking precedence more and more over the older urge to annex a private profit. The new enterprises were often on the fringes of the governmental sphere, liable at any time to become fully-fledged State organisations; and even where independent control was still maintained, the day for Government regulation appeared never to be far away. The State was no longer a purely centralised conception; the idea of an interlocking system of public service corporations loomed upon the horizon. Even in the field of local government, co-ordinated at many points with the central departments, a new form of mixed undertaking had arisen in which the control was exercised jointly by the representatives of local authorities and of private commercial interests.

But despite the many heartening factors of this remarkable development, there were, as has already been suggested, ominous crackings in different parts of the social structure. Whether they were the inevitable birth pangs of a new era or the forewarning symptoms of collapse, it was not easy to decide: a strong case could be made for either possibility. We did know, however, that civilisations had risen in the past and failed at some crucial point to discover the key to further progress: the momentum of change did not move inevitably in a forward direction. But while we were convinced in modern times that things were different, it

had to be admitted that the task of dealing with a so much greater complexity might well prove to be beyond human capacity, and a more tragic decline might ensue. We were confronted by a gigantic task of social co-ordination. Already the problem presented itself in two separate aspects, viz. its more local form in the development of the social state in the various national areas, and its wider form in the working out of the means to co-operation in the international field.

The modern age has disclosed no dearth of human constructiveness; new philosophies are invented as soon as new inventions have changed the outlines of social life. Philosophies, however, are but after-thoughts based upon the interpretation of facts already known—and one may formulate a philosophy of decay!<sup>(1)</sup> We may be prolific in the invention of new techniques, yet fail because of the lack of a driving motive. Civilisation is in need of a religion, an idealist conception that shall bind men together in their pursuit of the common good. The inadequacy of current conceptions of public morality must be clear to all who take the trouble to examine the working of human institutions. The Benthamite theory that the pursuit of the good of each shall accrue to the good of all, although discredited by modern schools of thought, is still strongly held by many whose avowed political beliefs would not admit of its validity.

#### IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL EFFICIENCY

There is an understandable tendency among those who have attained success, even by personal achievement, to turn their minds towards the maintenance of the *status quo*, an attitude which, while it is admirable when it assists the consolidation of the social advances already achieved, becomes a menace when it tends to impede the further operation of personal initiative. A system that maintains in posts of authority those who are no longer capable of contributing to the general good is doomed to failure. But under the present system the arrangement of the available human resources is so haphazard that it would be surprising if, in the majority of instances, the right people were placed in the right places. The strength of selfishness and the desire for privilege may contribute greatly to this result but the lack of design in selection is even more vital. It would be interesting, but not possible, to assess the influence of this factor of incompetence in the failure

(<sup>1</sup>) Our first thoughts go to Spengler!

of society to react favourably to changing circumstances and to discover whether the margin of inefficiency could be so narrowed by a reasonable improvement in this direction as materially to affect the chances of ultimate success.

In normal times the laboured rhythm of the social machine, due to the occupancy of vital positions by the incompetent, the privileged and the weary, is only apparent on very close observation and there are no definite standards of achievement with which the success or failure of a particular institution can be compared. During the emergency of war the matter is entirely different. Crisis calls for rapid action: the sudden expansion of certain fields and changes in the shape of society to meet the special conditions remove the possibility that the machinery will continue to run merely upon the devoted services of those stalwarts in subordinate positions who contribute so much of the driving force of society. Nor is the contemplation of modern war out of place in the context of administration, since the keynote of its success to-day rests in efficient organisation. The examination, for example, of the terrible failure at Gallipoli in 1915, where the advantages were so much on one side and where the reward of victory would in all probability have been so high that only great strategic brilliance on the part of the enemy could have condoned defeat, must bring out clearly the dangers of having the wrong people in the vital positions. But the evidence shows that it was not strategic brilliance on the part of the enemy, nor an inferiority, one way or the other, of the military virtues of either of the combatants that was to blame, but a failure in organisation on the part of those who had (it is to be supposed) devoted their whole lives to preparation for the meeting of some such emergency. There was not only a lack of the requisite organising ability but also, and much more importantly, a fatal lack of vision in high places which, often coupled with the blindness of selfish preconceptions, deprived the military organisation of the inspiration that, even without the other advantages, might have been sufficient to ensure success. This example from past history must suffice for to-day, though no doubt the historian of the present conflict will be able to match it with telling examples.

We should be optimistic indeed if we concluded that, under similar conditions of human selection, there was in peacetime no danger that similar—if less spectacular—situations could arise, and while the likelihood of an administrative Gallipoli may be

extremely remote (when it does occur it is the inevitable concomitant of a period of revolution), yet the cumulative drag of a constant inefficiency may be every bit as serious in the long run. It is easy, we know, to be wise after the event, but that is no excuse for those who are employed by the community to carry out special duties in its behalf and who fail at the critical time to come up to reasonable expectations. We need a system in which the available human resources are so arranged that the highest attainable level of efficiency is achieved, and in view of the importance of administration in its widest co-ordinative aspect there is no more important field for the achievement of this ideal.

#### ADMINISTRATION OR DICTATORSHIP?

Nor is this a problem merely of dividing the wheat from the chaff. A varied world needs an infinite range of capacities whose appropriate arrangement will call for a high degree of co-operativeness. The best will not be massed at one end of the scale, leaving the mediocre at the other, but throughout society there will need to be focal points of ability and intelligence co-ordinating a more or less limited area, society's lance-corporals in the fight against decadence, while those at the top, if not supremely clever, will need to be inescapably wise. Only the society whose efficiency standards are all-pervasive can hope effectively to weather the stress of modern life.

The importance of administration becomes clearer. For it is by its means that the improvement in the arrangement of resources, both material and human, will be achieved. The co-operation of the human elements presents the biggest problems, for there are so many grounds for disagreement in all spheres of activity and a system that fails to discover the means of composing such disagreements to the general advantage is doomed to failure. The question of leadership has always been important. Plato's guardians were to guide the community only at the price of their own life-long subserviency to a rigid system of training and of duties. But such a system overlooks the vital fact that those whose life is never closely identified with the ways of the general community cannot be expected to appreciate the common good. They will inevitably confuse it with their own welfare, and no power on earth can prevent the identification of such guardianship with narrow despotism. Many Utopias have visualised the existence of a self-denying aristocracy—a Samurai to lead the

masses along the path of administrative felicity. But such schemes usually presuppose the existence of a class of gifted persons capable of subordinating always their own interests to those of the whole community.

A widespread disappointment in the average achievement of the ordinary democratically selected leader has led to the cult of the superman. A dictator, expert exponent in the art of mass-suggestion and self-advertisement, is permitted to impose his leadership upon the nation. Thus, in allowing their disappointment to overcome their better sense, the people eagerly sacrifice the one thing they have that is worth retaining—their power to make the weight of their disappointment felt. It is a strange commentary upon events that, at a time when the rule of one is no longer practicable, the people should turn to the one for salvation. The dictator is a great personality, the voice and spirit of the nation. Yet he can do little without the expert. His Minister of Propaganda is truly his theatrical manager, preparing his conventionalised portrait for the show; but when he acts he acts through experts who know what he is incapable of knowing. If he be foolish enough to offer something to the people that they cannot possibly have, it will be he and not his experts who will be forced to eat his words. Yet, for a time he may well escape if he is astute enough, for he has all the advantages of the confidence trickster.

There is, nevertheless, a positive account. The power to break the sway of vested interests may enable the dictator to introduce real improvements, while the enthusiasms of popular support, rising at times almost to a religious fervour, will permit him to place burdens upon the people which, while essential to the general welfare, would not have been accepted under normal conditions. But the dictatorial system has its great defect in its inability to ensure its own rejuvenation or to evade the growth of a privileged hierarchy which will attempt to reserve to itself the functions it is no longer competent to perform.

#### EXPERTS TO SUCCEED THE DICTATORS?

As an alternative to the dictator, it has been seriously proposed that the leadership should be handed over to the expert. There are, however, many sorts of expert, and in deciding to which particular brand the power should be delegated a first-class controversy would certainly arise. Usually the expert designated

is the scientist or engineer, presumably upon the assumption that the discoverer of new processes or the builder of bridges is *prima facie* competent to co-ordinate human activities: a grave fallacy indeed. The only expert who bids fair to rule is the propagandist: without his aid no dictator could rise to power, no government could maintain its position, and no new programme could gain the adherence of the crowd.

Recognition that the masses are so easily and dangerously misled lies at the root of the educationalists' case for improved standards of education, the ultimate need of enlightened democracy. Unfortunately there is evidence that education may even assist mass movements. Moreover, not only is the raising of the general standards of intelligence a difficult enterprise but, at best, educational improvement is a slow process. It is in the light of these facts that the plan for an 'open conspiracy' has been formulated. Those who believe in the need for international co-operation—in the form of a World State in this instance—are to band themselves together in all ranks and conditions to work vigorously for the building of the New Commonwealth. This idea for the permeation of civilisation with a leaven of vigorous workers certainly fits the conditions of the new world more closely than a call for leadership alone. But that Mr. Wells himself regards the method as presenting something of a double-edged weapon is proved by his fantasy of a World State set up by a band of devoted airmen after the inevitable collapse has occurred. While it is not impossible that men imbued with the daring faculties of the aviator might make good rulers, there appears to be little reason to believe that they would make anything but very bad ones. There is, however, one class of worker to whom the rôle of 'open conspirator' seems inevitably to attach itself—the administrator, for he is both a servant and a co-ordinator who in the new society deals with an all-pervasive function.

With the growth, not only of State enterprise, but also of the large-scale non-governmental organisation, the need for efficient administration has expanded, and in the former sphere, at least, the development of a competent administrative service has been rapid. In Britain at an early stage, and largely under the devoted influence of Macaulay, it was recognised that in the selection of the personnel of the Civil Service, standards would need to be imposed and the principle of neutrality would have to be enforced. The introduction of open competition for the selection of the



administrators may well be considered an epoch-making step. It demonstrated the possibility of choosing an élite by a method which eliminated the soul-destroying repercussions of favouritism. And if it had its drawbacks—the individuals thus chosen might often tend to acquire a somewhat unpractical outlook and a number of quite average individuals might qualify—nevertheless the imposition of stiff educational standards ensured a much higher all-round level of efficiency than any alternative method could guarantee.

To exalt the position of the administrator would be absurd. In a world so intricately co-ordinated his importance is obvious. Yet his task is a technical one; to administer, not to lead. Quite apart from the method of selection, his environment would encourage a high level of competence rather than sheer brilliance. He is the servant of the community from which he has no prospect of making a profit; yet although a servant, the nature of the tasks by which he is confronted prevents his becoming the mere tool of those who lead. They may pull the strings of propaganda and their duty will be to choose the policy, but such is the nature of the modern problem that the range of their choice will be narrowly restricted by the resources available for manipulation. Philosophies must conform to the facts, which they may choose but cannot invent without proving their own error in practice. The truth that administration is thus so surely a matter of technique, while at the same time presenting a universal field of application, postulates the need for continuous research in this field. Moreover, the function of the administrator as civilisation's co-ordinator renders of paramount importance the constant search for and examination of the means for increasing administrative co-operation.

### QUEST FOR CIVIL SERVICE EFFICIENCY

It was with this end in view that this present investigation was undertaken; to make a preliminary survey of the work so far achieved in the direction of staff co-ordination and to suggest lines on which further advances require to be undertaken. We have made it clear that there are four definite needs for the efficient working of the administrative-clerical personnel of the public service:

- (1) Neutrality in selection.
- (2) Comprehensiveness in training.
- (3) Merit in promotion.
- (4) Flexibility in organisation.

(1) The first need has been efficiently met by the introduction of the principle of open competition, but because of its sample selecting attribute, and its greater efficiency when applied to a generalised range of posts, it has been discovered that there are certain specialised positions to which this method is not appropriate, and modifications have been introduced. The general control of recruitment by an autonomous commission ensures the final rejection of favouritism in all cases where the neutrality principle of open competition cannot be maintained. Recruitment of the administrative staff has become a highly specialised function and in our future state we can visualise the expansion of the Civil Service Commission to cover the community's whole administrative field, while other commissions may possibly be set up to recruit, on the same lines, other branches of the socialised services. The automatic flow of persons into and between the different occupations, previously effected by the individual himself in relation to the ebb and flow of market conditions (albeit, ever accompanied by a high degree of human suffering), will need to be replaced by an intricate system of staff transfers. In this system the various public service commissions will form an important element.

(2) We have seen that the question of training has generally been left very much to chance. A multitude of experiments are, however, under way and the integration of a comprehensive plan ought soon to be undertaken. The consideration of administrative processes, both from a practical and from a theoretical standpoint, is vital to the progress of administrative technique and, in view of the importance we are assigning to administration in the world of the future, this is clearly one of the problems the solution of which must be vigorously pursued. In this field we can visualise the growth of a system of committees and training units paying as much attention to training procedure as the Civil Service Commission already does to recruitment.

(3) For the furtherance of the merit principle in the making of after-entry selections, many experiments have been made, especially in the form of report systems and promotion boards. Progress along these lines is essential but we have discovered that there is a definite limit to further advance so long as the fourth essential, viz. flexibility in organisation, is lacking.

(4) There is a universal tendency for public services to become compartmentalised and for rules and regulations to impede the

flow of staff between the departments, with the result that in a sphere where the normal interplay of competitive forces is absent, the consequent loss of fluidity is further accentuated by factors of an organisational nature.

It is clearly necessary to restore the flexibility of the competitive sphere in order that full advantage shall be taken of the abilities of the staff. Otherwise a static system of castes will arise and the dead hand of routine will render the new services unfit to deal with the expanding social environment. To remove this drawback a system has been worked out in relation to the clerical workers, under which a high degree of staff fluidity would be attainable. A committee controlling a comprehensive scheme of staff transfers would accomplish the task of maintaining the oneness of the Service and defeating the inherent tendencies towards disintegration. The new administrative-clerical corps would be widely based and capable of dealing with a State-wide administrative system.

It has not been held necessary to propose the division of the administrative-clerical personnel into different services according to the nature of the tasks to be performed, as it is considered that administration is subject to the same general principles whatever may be the specialised functions of the particular organisation. Proposals that a new Industrial Service should be formed to deal with those functions relating to the commercial rather than the strictly governmental sphere do not appear to be warranted by the facts. The personnel of the General Post Office, an essentially commercial undertaking, has been recruited through the general Civil Service channels, and there is no evidence of loss through this practice.

#### IMPORTANCE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

In concentrating upon the organisational aspects of the public service there is always a danger that we may regard it too much from a mechanical standpoint and ignore the human side of the problem. A touch of Taylorism may be unavoidable in the workshop, but to organise an office upon the lines of a Ford factory would be to sacrifice one of the real essentials of successful administration—the willing co-operation of the human elements. If, therefore, we have made little reference to this side of efficiency in our discussion it does not mean that its importance has been underrated, but rather that a recognition of that importance

has been taken for granted. Much has been written about the prospect of the machine taking control of man, but there is little danger of that so long as man avoids the manufacture of the machine-mind. The widening sphere of the non-mechanical factors in our general economy—in administration, in organisation, in education and in distribution—renders it imperative for the future of the world that the human elements should be provided with the maximum sphere for individual expansion. It is therefore implicit in the search for administrative efficiency that the welfare of human beings as clerks and administrators should always be borne in mind. The working life is not the lesser part of the individual's life as a whole and the happiness of achievement is not an unimportant ingredient of human felicity. Nor does this mean that all must attempt the highest tasks to taste the sweets of success. It should be incomparably more satisfying to do the simpler job extremely well than to fail ignominiously of some higher aim through lack of inherent capacity.

The great administrative service, which we are visualising, would not therefore be worked by a select company of Samurai directing a vast band of robots. It would constitute a professional service open to all the talents, contributing to the new life not by the offer of an 'open sesame' in the form of a simple specific for all human ills but by proffering a way of advance by hard thinking, strenuous labour and great example. From the junior clerk or typist to the director-administrator each civil servant would be a personality, taking part in a vast enterprise of community service.

It should be added, in conclusion, that although we have dealt so fully with the British Civil Service, it has never been overlooked that the problem is a universal one. The British Civil Service has broadly indicated the lines for further advancement and disproved in practice many of the accusations delivered against governmental enterprise. To-day, despite its past insufficiencies and half-hearted attempts to solve vital problems, it holds the seeds of administrative greatness. Quite a modest measure of reform should suffice to fit it to the superhuman tasks by which the nation's administration will be faced in the period of Reconstruction.

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A valuable contribution from America, where the subject has for some time been regarded as vital to social progress.

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In Part VII of this vast two-volume study of government, Dr. Finer gives a detailed comparative study of the Civil Services of Britain, America, Germany and France from both general and personnel aspects.

*The Attainment of Efficiency in the State Service* (thesis).

In this unpublished thesis, offered by the present writer to the University of London in 1936 for degree of Doctor of Philosophy, the personnel problems of the Civil Service are treated on comparative lines. It is mentioned here for the guidance of students, to whom no doubt it will be available in the University library, as it contains materials not to be easily found elsewhere.

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Occasional articles on the Civil Service and its problems appear in the quarterlies and other magazines, but they are few and far between.

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# A P P E N D I X I

## STATISTICS

### COMPARISON OF CIVIL SERVICE STAFFS, 1939 AND 1944<sup>(1)</sup>

#### *A. Non-Industrial Civil Servants*

					<i>1st April, 1939</i>	<i>1st January, 1944</i>
Established	...	...	...	...	287,179	208,321
Unestablished	Whole-time	...	...	...	83,871	466,183
	„	Part-time	...	...	50,954	80,776
Total	...	...	...	...	<u>422,004</u>	<u>755,280</u>

These totals were divided between male and female workers as follows:

Men	...	...	...	...	311,916	378,203
Women	...	...	...	...	110,088	377,077
Total	...	...	...	...	<u>422,004</u>	<u>755,280</u>

It is interesting to note that the total of male staff in 1939 included 177,787 ex-Servicemen, the majority having served in the First World War.

This book has been concerned with the non-industrial staffs of the Civil Service, but to complete our picture we must not forget that the Civil Service also includes a large body of workers in industrial occupations, employed mainly in the Ministry of Works and the Defence Ministries. These are summarised in the next section.

#### *B. Industrial Civil Servants*

					<i>1st April, 1939</i>	<i>1st January, 1944</i>
Established	...	...	...	...	31,019	35,148
Unestablished	...	...	...	...	208,335	678,908
Total	...	...	...	...	<u>239,354</u>	<u>714,056</u>

<sup>(1)</sup> The figures relate to Great Britain only, and exclude Reserved and Agency Services in Northern Ireland.

*C. Distribution of Whole-time Non-Industrial Staffs according to General Gradings*

Grade	1st April, 1939		1st January, 1944	
	Established	Un-established	Established	Un-established
(i) Administrative ... ..	2,039	79	2,410	2,508
(ii) General Executive ... ..	5,155	132	7,159	4,272
(iii) General Clerical ... ..	34,309	3,439	30,234	160,376
(iv) Clerical Assistants ... ..	15,005	1,180	3,499	4,925
(v) Typing Grades... ..	12,075	3,188	6,427	33,618
(vi) Other Executive ... ..	13,252	382	15,467	26,589
(vii) Other Clerical ... ..	42,297	16,212	35,480	16,859
(viii) Assessors, etc., to Commissioners of Taxes ... ..	—	188	—	—
(ix) Inspectorates ... ..	2,947	2,840	2,484	2,734
(x) Professional, Scientific, and Technical ... ..	7,333	3,678	8,153	23,376
(xi) Subordinate Supervisors, etc. ... ..	10,705	15,136	9,970	59,297
(xii) Minor and Manipulative Grades ... ..	140,729	19,495	85,529	83,236
(xiii) Messengers, Porters, etc. ... ..	1,333	17,922	1,509	48,393
Total ... ..	287,179	83,871	208,321	466,183

*N.B.*—(ii) and (iii) are the main Treasury classes, while (vi) and (vii) include the equivalent departmental gradings.

*Addendum to second edition: (1)*

WHOLE-TIME NON-INDUSTRIAL CIVIL SERVANTS  
as at 1st April, 1947

	Men	Women
Administrative ... ..	3,600	595
Executive ... ..	40,479	10,079
Clerical and Sub-Clerical ... ..	132,291	128,230
Typing ... ..	104	30,258
Professional, Technical and Scientific ... ..	34,242	3,187
Minor and Manipulative ... ..	133,030	62,072
Technical Ancillary ... ..	46,829	7,791
Inspectorate ... ..	4,877	720
Messengerial, &c. ... ..	32,157	13,419
Totals ... ..	427,609	256,351

The above figures do not include part-time staff, which totalled 65,986 at that date.

(1) Reprinted from *Whitley Bulletin* for August, 1947.



*D. Distribution of Whole-time Non-Industrial Staffs among the Government Departments*

<i>Revenue.</i>	<i>1st April, 1939</i>	<i>1st January, 1944</i>
Post Office ... ..	182,485	183,428
Inland Revenue ... ..	24,224	36,030
Customs and Excise ... ..	14,492	9,195
<i>Defence.</i>		
Admiralty ... ..	12,923	48,437
War Office, including outstations ...	19,733	67,335
Air Ministry, ditto ...	19,657	35,920
Ministry of Aircraft Production ...	—	19,982
Ministry of Supply ... ..	—	65,846
<i>Civil Departments.</i>		
Central Government and Finance...	3,999	5,778
Imperial and Foreign ... ..	2,796	7,759
Home Office, Law and Justice ...	13,303	15,253
Education and Museums ... ..	3,578	2,229
Health ... ..	8,093	8,847
Labour ... ..	28,123	38,150
Assistance Board ... ..	8,067	8,483
Other Departments ... ..	1,776	2,250
<i>Industry and Trade.</i>		
Board of Trade and Mines... ..	4,703	10,717 <sup>(1)</sup>
Agriculture and Fisheries, etc. ...	5,096	5,473
Transport, etc. ... ..	7,239	19,679
<i>Miscellaneous.</i>		
Common Services ... ..	7,737	16,564
Pensions ... ..	3,026	9,351
Wartime Departments not included elsewhere ... ..	—	57,798
<b>Total ... ..</b>	<b>371,050</b>	<b>674,504</b>

These figures do not include the part-time staffs, the vast majority of whom are employed in the Post Office, viz. 43,167 out of 50,954, and 55,678 out of 80,776 respectively.

(<sup>1</sup>) Includes Ministry of Fuel and Power.

Addendum to second edition:

CIVIL STAFFS OF GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS ON 1st July, 1947

I Revenue Departments

Post Office (i) Operating Staff ... ..	216,240
(ii) Others ... ..	35,403
Inland Revenue ... ..	46,859
Customs and Excise ... ..	12,051

II Service and Supply Departments

Admiralty ... ..	34,481
War Office ... ..	43,053
Air Ministry ... ..	24,283
Ministry of Supply ... ..	41,462

III Social Services

Assistance Board ... ..	8,044
Ministry of Education ... ..	3,003
Ministry of Health ... ..	4,921
Ministry of Labour ... ..	39,007
Ministry of National Insurance ... ..	14,448
Ministry of Pensions ... ..	12,024
War Damage Commission ... ..	2,664
Other Social Service Departments <sup>(1)</sup> ... ..	5,976

IV Trade, Industry and Transport

Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries ... ..	6,414
Ministry of Civil Aviation ... ..	4,638
Ministry of Food ... ..	53,558
Ministry of Fuel and Power ... ..	6,196
Department of Scientific and Industrial Research ... ..	2,276
Board of Trade ... ..	14,692
Ministry of Transport ... ..	9,596
Other Departments in this Group <sup>(1)</sup> ... ..	3,421

V Agency Services

Ordnance Survey ... ..	3,860
Stationery Office ... ..	2,865
Ministry of Works ... ..	20,182
Other Agency Services <sup>(1)</sup> ... ..	1,523

VI Central Government, Home and Legal Departments

Home Office ... ..	3,828
Prison Commission ... ..	4,285
Other Departments in this Group <sup>(1)</sup> ... ..	14,018

VII Foreign and Imperial Services

Foreign Office ... ..	6,809
Other Departments in this Group <sup>(1)</sup> ... ..	4,301

VIII Reserved and Agency Services, Northern Ireland

... ..	5,237
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Grand Total ... .. 711,618

<sup>(1)</sup> Departments with staffs totalling less than 2,000 have been included in these totals and not shown separately.

Industrial staffs are excluded: Part-time staffs are included—two part-timers being reckoned as equivalent to one whole-timer.

*N.B.*—These figures are reprinted from Cmd. 7213. The classification is in some respects different from that shown on page 169, but it is sufficiently close for the purposes of comparison.

## APPENDIX 2

### BRIEF SUMMARY OF CIVIL SERVANTS' CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT (Spring, 1948)

IN ORDER to supplement the information in the text it is proposed in this Appendix briefly to summarise the current conditions of employment of the British civil servant, but it should be borne in mind, not only that this is a limited survey relating to some of the general grades, but that the details are subject to constant change and can be authoritatively determined only by reference to the various Treasury circulars that are issued from time to time and to current practice in the departments. Scales of pay, etc., are quoted only in respect of the Treasury classes (clerical, executive and administrative) but the other conditions are of general application to all the established classes. The conditions of service of the numerous temporary staffs vary, sometimes considerably, and should be obtained from the appointing agency. It should again be stressed that the details are included for the general information of persons interested in the Civil Service and must not be taken as being officially inspired.

#### *Other Classes and Grades*

The grades shown on the following page are employed in many departments, but there are numerous other grades and classes specialised within the different departments (especially in the Ministry of Labour and National Service, the Inland Revenue Department, and the Customs and Excise Department). Scales of pay are similar to those quoted for the clerical-executive ranges. There are also numerous professional and technical gradings (especially in such offices as the War Office and the Post Office) and minor and manipulative grades, usually recruited on a departmental basis, with their own salary scales.

#### *Provincial Scales*

The scales of pay in the schedule are those payable in the London postal area. Certain classes have slightly different scales according to whether the district of employment is classified as (1) Intermediate (for offices in the outer London area and larger cities); or (2) Provincial (for offices situated elsewhere).

## SALARY SCALES AND ANNUAL LEAVE

<i>Class</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>Scale<sup>(1)</sup></i>	<i>Average Increment</i>	<i>Annual<sup>(2)</sup> Leave days</i>
1. Typist, etc. <sup>(3)</sup>	—	50/- to 116/-	3/- <sup>(4)</sup>	18/24
2. Clerical Assistant	—	50/- to 102/-	3/- <sup>(4)</sup>	18/21
3. Clerical	—	£150 to £450 <sup>(5)</sup>	£15 <sup>(4)</sup>	24
4. Clerical	Higher	£525 to £650	£20	36
5. Executive	Junior	£230 to £650	£20 <sup>(4)</sup>	36
6. Executive	Higher <sup>(6)</sup>	£675 to £800	£25	36/48
7. Executive	Senior <sup>(6)</sup>	£850 to £1,000	£25	36/48
8. Executive	Chief	£1,000 to £1,200	£30/£35	36/48
9. Administrative	Assistant			
	Principal	£360 to £720	£25/£30	36/48
10. Administrative	Principal	£900 to £1,220	£30/£35	36/48
11. Administrative	Assistant			
	Secretary	£1,320 to £1,700	£50	36/48

*Notes.—*

- (1) Scales shown in shillings are weekly and paid weekly; those shown in pounds are annual and paid monthly. Grades 1 and 2 are exclusively female: the others are mixed and the salaries quoted are for men.
- (2) Annual leave often varies with length of service.
- (3) Graded as Learner Typist, Trainee Typist, Typist, Trainee Shorthand-Typist, or Shorthand-Typist, according to standard of technical qualification. The salary scale varies within the limits shown.
- (4) In the lower ranges certain points on the salary scale are determined according to age and not to length of service.
- (5) Officers of this grade have to pass an efficiency barrier at £360.
- (6) Above the Higher Clerical grade there are grades of Staff Clerks, Senior Staff Clerks and Principal Clerks covering the same salary range as these two Executive gradings.

*Women's Scales*

Women's salaries in the mixed grades (i.e. from 3 onwards) are somewhat lower. They commence at the same point, but gradually deviate until the maxima are equal to 80 per cent. of the men's rate. This degree of differentiation was arranged as the result of staff negotiations, but there is a general movement within the associations for the principle of equal pay.<sup>(1)</sup>

*Employment of Women: Other Conditions*

Until 15th October, 1946, when the marriage bar was abolished, women civil servants were bound to resign upon marriage, although the Treasury were empowered to make exceptions where it was to the advantage of the public service to do so. Now the woman civil servant has the option of continuing, provided she observes the conditions of service of her grade according to normal departmental agreements and practices. Gratuities will continue to be granted to women who voluntarily resign at the time of marriage. These gratuities are for established officers only and are subject to the completion of a

(1) Fully documented in *Report of Royal Commission on Equal Pay, 1944-46*, (Cmd. 6937).

minimum of six years' whole-time service: they are based upon a scale with an upper limit of a year's salary. Special maternity leave arrangements have been made for married women civil servants.

### *Tenure*

With the exception just referred to and of the temporary appointments (see below), the civil servant's tenure is permanent subject to his good behaviour, efficiency and the continued existence of his post.

### *Superannuation*

This is the only condition of service regulated by Parliament, but it should be noted particularly that these Superannuation Acts (from 1834 to 1935) do not give the individual civil servant a legal right to a pension. They merely authorise the granting by the Treasury of a pension within the prescribed terms and the last word rests with the Treasury, from whose decision there is no appeal. In practice there is no difficulty here: the civil servant receives his pension unless he has broken the rules.

The scheme is non-contributory and applies only to established civil servants. To unestablished <sup>(1)</sup> whole-time civil servants, however, a gratuity may be granted upon retirement. The amount of pension depends upon length of service and the amount of his salary at retirement, which normally takes place at 60. Heads of departments may extend the retiring age to 65. Pensions are also granted in case of retirement on account of ill-health, and the Acts cover a gratuity (maximum of one's year's pay) to dependants in case of death while in harness. The actual pension consists of a lump sum gratuity at retirement plus an income payment after retirement which cannot exceed 50 per cent. of the retiring salary. Under certain conditions the retiring officer can surrender a part of his pension to a dependant, otherwise the pension ceases with his death.

### *Temporary Appointments*

These are common in the Civil Service. In peacetime they are made usually to cover work of a temporary nature, viz. to meet sudden peaks of work or to deal with special duties, and they may lead to permanent jobs at a later stage. During the war officers in most grades were appointed on a temporary basis. Such appointments included no offer of permanency.

Temporary officers are often remunerated on less favourable salary scales and they are subject to varying conditions in regard to annual leave, sick leave, subsistence allowances, etc.

### *Hours of Attendance*

In normal times some of the Civil Service staffs employed in the London area work a seven-hour day, but the majority of the Service are subject to an eight-hour day, a half holiday on Saturday being usually allowed as a privilege.

<sup>(1)</sup> Unestablished officers are whole-time officers who have not qualified for establishment. The terms 'unestablished' and 'temporary' overlap, but the former usually applies to those who have reasonable security of tenure and the latter to those who have not.

Since the Battle of Britain, civil servants have by voluntary agreement relinquished certain rights in regard to hours of attendance, and longer hours are still being worked.

### *Transfers*

As we have pointed out in the text, there are difficulties involved in transfers between departments, except when special situations arise—such as when a new ministry is being formed or on the outbreak of war. However, such transfers do occur and it is also possible for individuals to arrange transfers among themselves (possibly as the result of advertisement in the Civil Service press). All such transfers are carefully regulated. There are also numerous official transfers carried out within a department for administrative reasons. In all cases where the change is made for official convenience, classified as 'compulsory' transfers, the officer is reimbursed for cost of transport and expenses incurred in connection with the removal of his home. In the case of transfers for personal reasons, i.e. 'voluntary' transfers, the officer pays his own expenses. A transfer of the compulsory type does not affect the officer's seniority if it is within his existing grade, but a transfer on a voluntary basis between ministries means that the officer will go to the foot of the list in his new office. This rule is a great brake upon this kind of sideways flow, but it is strongly supported by the staffs who fear the loss of seniority through the inflow of officers with high seniority from other departments.

### *General Conditions*

Established officers receive full pay while on sick leave, properly certified by a medical officer, and are not at present subject to national insurance except on a voluntary basis. They will, however, be included in the new National Insurance scheme.

Such matters as removal expenses, subsistence when away from home on official business, substitution pay for prolonged service on higher duties, allowances for the use of motor-cars on official business, special leave for personal emergencies, are regulated in detail by the Treasury, usually as the result of consultation with the staff associations. The general arrangements are equitably conceived and it is not the policy to interpret such regulations within the departments in a narrow spirit.

### *Civil Rights*

As a citizen the civil servant has complete freedom of opinion and the right to vote as he thinks fit; as a person holding an office of profit under the Crown he cannot sit as a Member of Parliament, and his mere candidature renders his resignation necessary, nor would he have any hope of reinstatement should such candidature fail. Participation in local government politics depends upon the department in which he serves. Departments in close touch with local government do not usually permit such participation.

The civil servant has complete freedom to organise or join a staff association or trade union. In fact he is encouraged to join such a union and the system

of joint Whitley Councils, which is universal within the Service, depends largely on such membership.

### *Rules of Conduct*

The civil servant is expected to conduct his private affairs with propriety and to behave generally in a way consonant with his official position, but, on the other hand, there are no definite strictures placed upon him other than those affecting any citizen under the ordinary laws of the land and, provided he does not bring disgrace upon the public service, it is understood that his private affairs are his own and not subject to a special censorship on account of his official position.

There is, however, one important exception. Special weight is placed upon financial probity and bankruptcy is regarded as a serious matter, to be disclosed immediately on pain of dismissal in case of failure to do so. In considering the gravity of the individual case the authorities take carefully into account whether or not the difficulties have been occasioned by unavoidable misfortune and not by extravagance or culpable improvidence.

In virtue of his easy access to important information the civil servant is specially subject to the Official Secrets Act of 1889, which makes the unlawful publication or communication of official information a punishable offence.

There are also special rules with regard to patents and inventions, participation in other paid occupations (in any case forbidden during official hours), interest in contracts, publications on official subjects, etc.

### *Examinations and Other Information*

General conditions of service of particular grades and details of the competitions announced from time to time are obtainable from the Civil Service Commission at Burlington Gardens, Piccadilly, London, W.1.<sup>(1)</sup>

## APPENDIX 3

### THE ANNUAL REPORT SYSTEM

THE OBJECTIVE of any satisfactory system of promotion that discards purely automatic methods of selection must be to discover effective means of comparing the characteristics of members of the staff employed on different work under different supervising officers and, often, in different geographic situations. The obvious basis for such an assessment will be some form of standardised personal report.

In the British Civil Service the introduction of proficiency records was proposed as long ago as 1853, in the Trevelyan-Northcote Report, and although some departments subsequently evolved tentative systems for their

<sup>(1)</sup> See also *The Civil Service, Careers for Men and Women Series, No. 11*, issued by the Ministry of Labour and National Service and published by H.M. Stationery Office.

own use, no real attempt was made to regularise the procedure until the setting up of the Committee on Promotion by the Civil Service National Whitley Council in 1921. The model report form which it proposed was widely adopted and, as the result of further investigations by the Council, a revised form was introduced in 1938. An abbreviated version of this is reproduced below; the heading containing details of the officer with whom the report is concerned, and the footnotes for the guidance of reporting officers being omitted.

Annually, each officer in receipt of a basic salary of not more than £700, and within the range of promotion (which means that he has sufficient service on the grade to be considered), is assessed in respect of each of the following characteristics:

(1) Knowledge: (a) of branch, (b) of department; (2) Personality and force of character; (3) Judgment; (4) Power of taking responsibility; (5) Initiative; (6) Accuracy; (7) Address and tact; (8) Power of supervising staff; (9) Zeal; (10) Official conduct.

*Model Annual Report Form.*

ANNUAL REPORT ON MEMBERS OF THE STAFF  
(Abbreviated version)

SECTION I—Performance of Duties in present Grade.

	Marking	Remarks
1. Knowledge:		
(a) of Branch ... ..	.....	
(b) of Department ... ..	.....	
2. Personality and Force of Character	.....	
3. Judgment ... ..	.....	
4. Power of taking responsibility ... ..	.....	
5. Initiative ... ..	.....	
6. Accuracy ... ..	.....	
7. Address and tact ... ..	.....	
8. Power of supervising staff ... ..	.....	
9. Zeal ... ..	.....	
10. Official Conduct ... ..	.....	

General remarks (including note of any special qualifications not included above)

SECTION II—Degree of Fitness for Promotion.

Delete all but one of the following:

Exceptionally well qualified.  
Highly qualified.

Qualified.  
Not yet qualified.

Remarks:



The reporting, or certifying officer, whose rank must be at least two grades above that of the officer being reported upon, is required to show under each heading the degree of qualification on his present work in the following manner:

A.—Outstanding.

D.—Indifferent.

B.—Very good.

E.—Poor.

C.—Satisfactory.

A. or B. markings cannot be given under heading No. 10, Official Conduct. Additional explanatory remarks may be inserted against any of the headings and a space for General Remarks is provided, in which the certifying officer can add any relevant details.

The final step is to insert the degree of qualification for promotion to the next grade, under one of the following classifications: exceptionally well qualified; highly qualified; qualified; not yet qualified. Reasons have to be given for the assignment of the first or last classification, since these are considered as being respectively well above and well below the average assessment.

The report is signed at the foot by the certifying officer and countersigned by the head of the sub-department, who may also add his opinion. The report is treated as confidential, but when an E. marking is given under any of the headings, the officer has to be informed in writing, with reasons, and he is requested to sign one copy of this intimation as evidence that the rule has been complied with. The intention of this advice is to afford the officer an opportunity of knowing his failings and of effecting an improvement, if that is possible, and therefore this rule is not normally operated where the reason for the E. marking is inexperience or where, owing to ill-health, it is considered undesirable. The reports when completed are intended to furnish the chief evidence on which the promotion authority of the department shall base its decisions.

This form of report, in view of its widespread use, deserves closer examination. In the first place it appeals as being straightforward and businesslike, free from the pseudo-scientific frills of certain more complicated systems. Built up upon the actual experience of the Civil Service (similar forms were actually in use in the Admiralty and Inland Revenue departments at the time of its general adoption), it cannot, owing to the limited period of its employment, claim to be more than a tentative effort to solve a problem of great difficulty, and it is not surprising, therefore, that it has been widely criticised or that it should be considered capable of further development.

It has been pointed out that the character headings are in some cases ambiguous, e.g. 'initiative' may refer either to intellectual initiative or to the initiative of the energetic and adventurous temperament, and in some offices the reporting officers have been supplied with a list of definitions, or 'pointers' as they are called. The introduction of further headings, such as 'mental powers', 'speed of working', 'adaptability'—three notable omissions—has been suggested.

But the chief line of criticism has been directed upon the problem of integrating the various character headings into a complete judgment and the difficulty of achieving an equivalent standard of assessment throughout the organisation.

In what proportions should we count the various characteristics to build

up the final picture? No two marking officers will answer this query in the same manner. Some will place more importance than others on certain characteristics, even discounting entirely the value of particular headings. To overcome this difficulty numerical assessments have been introduced under some systems at this stage, the final result then being achieved by arithmetical calculation. But that does not solve the problem; it merely gives it the appearance of having been solved. Numerical assessments tend to give an impression of accuracy where in the long run only approximate results can be achieved, for we are inevitably concerned with an act of human judgment. In consequence of all this it is strongly maintained in some quarters that no matter what form the report may take, the final result will already have existed from the very start in the mind of the reporting officer and that the separate assessments will have been deduced from this preconceived mind-picture. There is undoubtedly much truth in this theory, yet the very requirement that the reporting officer shall give definite thought to the various headings will serve a good purpose merely if it ensures that he does, at some stage, give a really concentrated attention to the important character details of his staff as set out in the official scheme. It helps to restrict the haphazard element in the marking process, and thus assists in an approach to uniformity of assessment standards as between the different members of the staff.

But if, by the means of a stereotyped report, some approach to an equivalent standard of assessment is reached as between the members of the same reporting officer's staff, it is by no means certain that the system will make it possible to achieve a similar equivalence of marking as between the staffs of different reporting officers within the same promotional field. Each reporting officer will approach his task with different preconceptions. Some will, naturally, give more weight to some factors than others: some will have a personal bias which will colour the whole tenor of these judgments. To reduce the reports of different reporting officers to an equivalent standard it would be necessary to apply a 'coefficient of marking ability' to the results obtained. This is, of course, a fantastic idea, but there are various ways of improving the situation. In the first place special importance can be placed upon the selection and instruction of reporting officers; in the second their reports can be subjected to a stiff challenge and careful consideration can be given to their personal idiosyncrasies when the final judgment is being made. There is an impression, which is not, however, easily confirmed, that less attention is given than might well be given to these aspects of the reporting system. Two practical safeguards are indeed incorporated in the British scheme: a second officer is required to countersign the first assessment and members of the staff are constantly transferred within the promotion unit in order to make available confirming reports from different reporting officers.

No system, however theoretically perfect, can work efficiently unless the human participants are continually impelled to maintain a vivid interest in its functioning. If the reporting officers discover themselves to be in a similar situation to those on whom they are reporting, e.g. with a general lack of prospects and perhaps small hope of further advancement, they will tend to lose interest and to treat their rating duties as very much a matter of routine. They will tend to regard themselves as being quite independent of the mistakes they may make, and they will not conjure up the energies necessary to challenge

what they may consider in their hearts to be the mistakes of others. In consequence, ratings already applied to a subordinate officer will tend to stick to him in the future and his general rating will continue to rest upon the standards of assessment of the first reporting officer with whom he was officially concerned. This is a corroboration of the tag about giving a dog a bad name—or, indeed, a good one! Clearly, then, a rating scheme can only work efficiently in an environment where the reporting officers themselves have every right to expect that their reasonable ambitions will be fulfilled. Efficiency percolates from the top.

The model report form was adopted, sometimes with modifications, in most Government departments. Some of the smaller units, where direct contact between the directing elements and the rank-and-file were maintained, decided that the new routine was quite unnecessary and continued with the old methods, although, if it is in fact desirable that equality of conditions should be attained throughout the Service as a whole, it is by no means certain that this decision was a desirable one. The revised form adopted in 1938—the version actually described in this appendix—did not go as far as certain sections of the staff desired and it has not been long enough in use for an estimate to be made of its increased value.

There are other methods of rating, such as the Probst system widely used in America and the rating scale method at one time employed in the American Civil Service, but we have not space to discuss these and other alternatives here. It is significant that the rating scale was abandoned in 1936, when the Federal Service Commissioners introduced a modified rating form which included certain of the characteristics of our own model form.

In conclusion it can be affirmed that the standardised report has now become an essential ingredient in the personnel administration of large concerns. Since the First World War considerable advances have been made in the rationalising and improvement of rating systems and experiments were actively in progress at the outbreak of the present conflict. Many of the criticisms directed against actual schemes indicate that the scope and limitations of such schemes are not always recognised by the rank-and-file, who tend to expect more from the report system than it can possibly achieve. In this sense the system is likely to distract attention from the fundamental faults of the personnel scheme and it is essential that wider appreciation of its legitimate objectives and natural limitations should be disseminated.

## APPENDIX 4

### COMMITTEE ON THE TRAINING OF CIVIL SERVANTS, 1944

THE REPORT of the above Committee, published in May, 1944,<sup>(1)</sup> is bound to have far-reaching effects upon the future of the Civil Service and, since it has a considerable bearing upon many points discussed in this book, the following brief summary should be of interest to readers.

#### *Scope of Inquiry*

The Report does not cover the Foreign and Colonial Services or the various manipulative grades, or dwell in detail upon the professional and technical classes, all in themselves important fields for specialised inquiry. In fact it deals with the clerical, executive, and administrative classes, i.e. the field covered by our own survey.

The Committee, under the chairmanship of the Rt. Hon. Ralph Assheton, M.P., Financial Secretary to the Treasury, included six persons holding important administrative posts—three within and three outside the Civil Service—and two leading members of the Staff Side of the National Whitley Council. It was clearly an expert committee and was set up in February, 1943, following upon a debate in the House of Commons on the sixteenth report for the Session 1941-42 of the Select Committee on National Expenditure, which dealt with 'Organisation and Control of the Civil Service'. Its terms of reference were:

'To examine the general question of the training of civil servants, including the question whether a Staff College should be established, and, if so, the particular form and character which that college should take.'

#### *General Principles*

In remarking upon the tendency on the part of the public to criticise the Service, the Report suggests that 'the urge to "shoot the man at the piano" often arises not so much from the demerits of the performer as from dislike of the tune'. The point is made that ill-considered criticism may easily make matters worse and, after referring to the more usual criticisms, the Report states 'whatever shortcomings there may have been in the past, our aim has been to consider in what ways, at their different levels, the servants of the State can be assisted to attain and maintain the wider outlook, greater adaptability and the technical knowledge which the State service will call for in the years that lie ahead'.

The object of training is to increase efficiency, which has two aspects, viz. the technical efficiency of the individual to perform a particular task and the less tangible efficiency of the organisation deriving from its individual participants. Both these aspects are borne in mind.

(1) H.M.S.O. Cmd. 6525.

Briefly stated the five main aims of training are as follows:

- (1) Attainment of precision and clarity in the transaction of business.
- (2) Continuing adjustment of outlook and methods to new needs of new times.
- (3) Broad views to counteract tendency towards robot-like efficiency.
- (4) Vocational training, not only to fit the individual to present work, but also to look to expanding duties and higher capacities.
- (5) Routine work being largely unavoidable, substantial regard to be paid to staff morale.

### *Proposals*

I.—The Treasury should exercise general control of training and for this purpose should appoint a Director of Training and Education. Each department should organise its own scheme, which should be controlled by the Establishments Officer through a Departmental Training Officer, with necessary staff, great care being taken in selecting teachers.

II.—Staff co-operation through the Whitley Councils to be sought in the working out of schemes.

III.—Up-to-date official equipment is an essential background to training.

IV.—At the outset of the officer's career special attention should be paid to the probation period, which should be made more of a reality than at present.

V.—Establishment Officers should be regarded as key men. They should study staff management and office organisation and keep in touch with staff practice in business organisations.

VI.—Four types of training are suggested, viz. (i) vocational training; (ii) background training; (iii) further education; and (iv) centralised training, and these are again distributed among various training categories according to their objective, viz. (a) initial training; (b) training for mobility; (c) training for supervision; and (d) training for higher administration. The Report outlines how these different types of training should be worked for the main classes—clerical, typing, executive and administrative (with a brief reference to professional and technical). Naturally the accent is different in each case and is measured to the needs and duties of the class, varying as we proceed higher up the duty scale. There is not space to give a complete summary of the proposals here; the Report must be consulted for that purpose. In any case the complete picture can only be filled in gradually through practice. The following sketch of the main types of training will, however, show what the Committee is driving at.

#### *(i) Vocational Training*

Each department will organise a scheme of training for its own recruits, who will not be put on actual duties straight away. They will at this stage be given a booklet, giving a brief history and outline of the functions of the department, and also a guide to office procedure. The technique of the model public office (as worked out so successfully in the Post Office) will be adopted wherever practicable. This stage will be followed by a period on the actual work under the supervision of an experienced officer. During his early years the officer will be moved from branch to branch at reasonable intervals to

acquire further experience. Later on the problem of acquiring faculties for supervision is to be tackled. The interchange of staff in the higher ranges with the business world is not recommended but it is thought that the secondment of officers to local government would sometimes prove useful.

### (ii) *Background Training*

The department should aim at giving the staff, by such methods as conference and the circulation of an office bulletin, as much information as possible about its work. Each large department should have a house journal, on the lines of the Post Office Magazine before the war, and a good library, available to all. The exploration of the use of films is recommended. Visits to other branches are considered desirable, especially as a means of broadening horizons.

### (iii) *Further education*

Departments should encourage their staffs to acquire outside vocational qualifications by provision, in approved cases, of time off and payment of fees. Non-vocational further educations should also be encouraged in co-operation with the authorities in every way short of paying fees. All civil servants up to 18 should be expected to pursue their education on a part-time basis.

### (iv) *Centralised Training*

Institutional training is not recommended for the clerical grades and only to a limited extent for the executive and professional grades, but for the administrative cadets the Service should have its own central organisation for training. It is not considered desirable, however, that the Government should associate itself with the establishment of the proposed National Administrative Staff College, though if such were established some civil servants might attend experimentally.

Finally the Report gives special attention to the problems of training in higher administration, to which many of the foregoing proposals naturally apply. It is interesting to note, for example, that the idea of sabbatical leave is favourably received, say for promising officers in their early thirties to pursue an approved course or undertake a specific task of research. Short-term transfers might also be arranged to Services outside the United Kingdom. These proposals are clearly intended mainly for the administrative class, but the Committee disowns the notion that they should be confined to that class and adds: 'On the contrary we attach considerable importance to the application of some of them to selected members of other grades, especially the executive and professional or technical.'

### *Conclusion*

This summary gives but a brief idea of the contents of the Report. They are not revolutionary in detail, but *as a whole* the Report will have revolutionary results if it is fully implemented, as indeed it should be. There is not space to discuss the pros and cons of the proposals; moreover that would be largely a duplication, since most of the points have already been touched upon in Chapter 4 which, it may be stated, the Report largely corroborates.

Many will be disappointed at the rejection of the Staff College proposal, though it is obviously a development that might have its own peculiar drawbacks to the staffs. Yet it seems that the Committee, without saying so in so many words, have gone half-way to adopting the idea, when they suggest that the training centre for administrative cadets might develop into a centre which could serve as a clearing house of ideas for Civil Service administrators. This method of starting from small beginnings and gradually growing with the needs of the situation is typical of British constitutional practice and there is much to be said for it. But a warning may need to be offered. If such an experiment were embarked upon in a narrow class-conscious spirit it would surely fail, since the new age calls insistently for the co-operation of all.

One thing is clear, and the Committee agree, training cannot stand alone. The success of the scheme will depend upon changes elsewhere in the structure of the Civil Service. Such matters as probation, promotion, establishments work, movement between departments, are specifically mentioned, but it is doubtful whether even the Committee visualise what a revolution in internal flexibility will be required to make the proposed training scheme a success and, in its turn, will be brought about if it is a success.

## FOOTNOTE

SPRING, 1948

ALTHOUGH A YEAR has passed since 'Introduction—The Emerging Service, 1947'<sup>1</sup> was written, no substantial emendation is called for. During this period the developments referred to have gone steadily forward but without any radical speeding up or change of direction. Some departments, notably the Inland Revenue Department and the Ministry of Labour and National Service, have adopted new systems of departmental gradings. In the wider field a notable advance is about to be made by bringing into the established field a large block of industrial gradings thus making them eligible for superannuation. A major operation is in progress in the building up of the new Ministry of National Insurance by taking into the Civil Service employees of the approved societies and by selection from among civil servants in other government departments.

The findings of the Social Survey referred to on page 18 are now available, but they add little to what we already knew and may be summed up in the statement that few prospective entrants to the Service have more than a vague idea of what are its prospects as a career. The conclusion is that more information needs to be made available. It is of course a vital responsibility of the citizen in a democracy that he should be well informed about those who serve him. A number of other interesting contributions have been made to the discussion of the Civil Service.<sup>2</sup> Main criticisms and proposals are concentrated upon the Administrative Class but the vital problems of staff efficiency and incentives in the wider realms of the Service—among its working classes, as it were—are consistently ignored by most of these inquirers.

Inside the Civil Service the problem of manpower is seriously concerning both the directing and the staff elements. On behalf of the latter the National Whitley Council and the staff associations have the matter of economy in staff under close consideration.

Recent political developments in the wider world have led to controversy over the holding of security posts by civil servants of extremist persuasions, and the whole question of the civil servant's political rights is being reviewed.

(<sup>1</sup>) See page 13.

(<sup>2</sup>) e.g. *Recruiting Civil Servants*, Planning No. 266 (P.E.P., 1947); *The Crisis of the Bureaucracy*, Leonard Skevington in 'Pilot Papers, Vol II, June 1947; *The Reform of the Higher Civil Service*, Fabian Society (1947); *Officials and the Public*, Sir Henry Bunbury (Bureau of Current Affairs, 1947); *Civil Servants, The Facts*, Staff Side, National Whitley Council (1948); *The Experience of a University Teacher in the Civil Service*, Sir Oliver S. Franks (O.U.P., 1947); *The Civil Service in the Changing State*, H. R. G. Greaves (Harrap, 1947).



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